<Name>
Mr. Burns
US History II/APUSH
<Due Date>

New Deal Society

Instructions:

1. Read the questions below.
2. Then read and annotate using the highlighter and/or the comments function (Highlight text → CTRL+ALT+M) to find details that can help you answer the questions.
3. Then answer the questions utilizing the info in your annotated sections.

Questions:

Q1. How did the New Deal fail to help women and African Americans? ____

Q2. What are some modern arguments against FDR and the New Deal? ___

Q3. How and why did a conflict develop between the Supreme Court and the other Branches of Government? ___

Q4. How did the New Deal programs affect arts programs around the nation?___

The Limitations of the New Deal

For all its successes, the New Deal fell short of many people's expectations. The Fair Labor Standards Act, for example, covered fewer than one quarter of all gainfully employed workers. It set the minimum wage at 25 cents an hour, which was well below what most covered workers already made. New Deal agencies also were generally less helpful to women and minority groups than they were to white men.

Women

Many aspects of New Deal legislation put women at a disadvantage. The NRA codes, for example, permitted lower wages for women's work in almost a quarter of all cases. In relief and job programs, men and boys received strong preference. In accordance with the social customs of the time, jobs went to male "heads of families," unless the men were unable to work.

No New Deal provision protected domestic service, the largest female occupation. In 1942, an African American domestic worker in St. Louis pleaded with the President to ask employers, the "rich people," to "give us some hours to rest in and some Sundays off and pay us more wages." Working 14-hour days, she earned only $6.50 per week. A brutally honest official wrote back to her:

" State and Federal labor laws, which offer protection to workers in so many occupations, have so far not set up standards for working conditions in domestic situations. There is nothing that can be done . . . to help you and others in this kind of employment."

African Americans

Federal relief programs in the South, including public works projects, reinforced racial segregation. As a rule, African Americans were not offered jobs at a professional level. They were kept out of skilled jobs on dam and electric power projects, and they received lower pay than whites for the same work. Because the Social Security Act excluded both farmers and domestic workers, it failed to cover nearly two thirds of working African Americans. One black American expressed deep disappointment with FDR's policies:

" All the prosperity he had brought to the country has been legislated and is not real. Nothing he has ever started has been finished. My common way of expressing it is that we are in the middle of the ocean like a ship without an anchor. No good times can come to the country as long as there is so much discrimination practiced. . . .

I don't see much chance for our people to get anywhere when the color line instead of ability determines the opportunities to get ahead economically." —Testimony by Sam T. Mayhew in 1939, collected in Such As Us (1978)

Nor did the New Deal do anything to end discriminatory practices in the North. In many black neighborhoods, for example, white-owned businesses continued to employ only whites. In the absence of help from the federal government, African Americans took matters into their own hands. Protesters picketed and boycotted such businesses with the slogan "Don't shop where you can't work."

The early Depression had seen an alarming rise in the number of lynchings. The federal government again offered no relief. A bill to make lynching a federal crime was abandoned by Congress in 1938. NAACP leader Walter White recalled in 1948 that FDR had given this explanation for his refusal to support these measures:

“ Southerners, by reason of seniority rule in Congress, are chairmen or occupy strategic places on most of the Senate and House committees.If I come out for the anti-lynching bill now, they will block every bill I ask Congress to pass to keep America from collapsing. I just can’t take that risk.” —President Franklin Roosevelt

Although African Americans in the North had not supported FDR in 1932, by 1936 many had joined his camp. Often the last hired and first fired, they had experienced the highest unemployment rates of any group during the Depression. For this reason, those who did gain employment appreciated many of the New Deal programs.

Other aspects of Roosevelt’s record also had some appeal to many African Americans. He appointed more African Americans to policymaking posts than any President before him. The Roosevelts also seemed genuinely concerned about the fate of African Americans. These factors help to explain FDR’s wide support among black voters.

Modern-Day Critics

Although many of the people who directly benefited from the New Deal are now gone, their children and grandchildren still pass down individual stories of hope and help that came to their families through programs like the WPA.

To many Americans, FDR’s bold actions place him among the nation’s greatest Presidents. Yet some modern-day critics question whether the New Deal achieved the greatest good for the greatest number of Americans.Some critics have examined this question in recent years and found the New Deal lacking. They say that New Deal programs hindered economic progress, threatened American free enterprise, and encouraged inefficient use of resources. Further, they charge that the programs created a dangerously powerful federal bureaucracy that usurped the historical role of state governments in making public policy.

For example, critics maintain that New Deal employment programs created “make work” jobs instead of allowing the free market to determine what jobs, and how many, were needed. These job programs were financed by heavy tax increases, which took money out of the economy and gave people less money to spend on products that would boost production and create jobs.

Modern critics also attack the policy of paying farmers not to plant. They contend that market demand should have been allowed to determine the supply and price of farm products. In a time of hunger, the program wasted precious resources, they note—from dumped milk to burned wheat. The program encouraged some farmers to plant crops on poor land just so that they could later take the land out of production and get paid for doing so. This caused marginal soil to erode further and become depleted. Farm production quotas penalized efficient and less-efficient farmers equally, while the free market would have weeded out inefficiency and rewarded productivity.

Finally, the New Deal receives criticism from people who oppose deficit spending—paying out more money from the annual federal budget than the government receives in revenues. Deficit spending to fund New Deal programs required the government to borrow money. Government borrowing produced what economists call the "crowding-out effect"—making less money available for private borrowing by businesses and consumers.

At the heart of the question is a difference in ideologies. Some people believe that the New Deal violated the free-market system that Americans have traditionally cherished. Others believe that providing direct relief to many of the nation's suffering citizens was worth the compromise. These debates continue today.

The Court-Packing Fiasco

Roosevelt received criticism not only for his programs, but also for his actions. No act aroused more opposition than his attempt to "pack" the Supreme Court. Throughout the early New Deal, the Supreme Court had caused FDR his greatest frustration. The Court had invalidated the NIRA, the AAA, and many state laws from the Progressive Era. In February 1937, FDR proposed a major court-reform bill.

The Constitution had not specified the number of Supreme Court justices. Congress had last changed the number in 1869. By Roosevelt's time, the number nine had become well established. Arguing that he merely wanted to lighten the burden on the aging justices, FDR asked Congress to allow him to appoint as many as six additional justices, one for each justice over 70 years old.

Roosevelt's real intention was to "pack" the Court with judges supportive of the New Deal. Negative reaction came swiftly from all sides. Critics blasted the President for trying to inject politics into the judiciary. They warned Congress not to let him undermine the constitutional principle of separation of powers. With several dictators ruling in Europe, the world seemed already to be tilting toward tyranny. If Congress let FDR reshape the Supreme Court, critics worried, the United States might head down the same slope.

Strong opposition forced FDR to withdraw his reform bill. He also suffered political damage. Many Republicans and Southern Democrats united against further New Deal legislation. This alliance remained a force for years to come.

In the end, FDR still wound up with a Court that tended to side with him. Some older justices retired, allowing the President to appoint justices who favored the New Deal. Even earlier, however, the Court, acting on lawsuits filed by New Deal adversaries, had begun to uphold measures from the Second New Deal, including the Wagner Act. The Court may have been reacting to public opinion, or it may have decided that those measures were better thought out and more skillfully drafted than earlier ones.

The New Deal's Effects on Culture

Artists created enduring cultural legacies for the nation during the Great Depression. They were aided by federal funds allocated by Congress to support the popular and fine arts and to provide jobs.

Literature

Several works of literature destined to become classics emerged during this period. One example is Pearl Buck's novel The Good Earth (1931), a saga of peasant struggle in China. In 1937, folklorist Zora Neale Hurston published Their Eyes Were Watching God, a novel about a strong-willed African American woman and the Florida town in which she lives. John Steinbeck wrote The Grapes of Wrath (1939), a powerful tale about Dust Bowl victims who travel to California in search of a better life. Funding from Fortune magazine allowed James Agee and Walker Evans to live for weeks with Alabama sharecroppers. The result of their experiences was the nonfiction masterpiece Let Us Now Praise Famous Men (1941).

Radio and Movies

The new medium of radio became a major source of entertainment for American families. Comedy shows of the 1930s produced stars such as Jack Benny, Fred Allen, George Burns,and Gracie Allen. The first daytime dramas, called soap operas because soap companies often sponsored them, emerged in this period. These 15-minute stories, designed to provoke strong emotional responses, were meant to appeal to women who remained at home during the day.

Symphonic music and opera also flourished on the radio.By 1933, the movies had recovered from the initial setback caused by the early Depression. Americans needed an escape from hard times, and the movies provided that escape. For a quarter, customers could see a double feature (introduced in 1931) or take the whole family to a drive-in theater (introduced in

1933). Federal agencies used motion pictures to publicize their work. The Farm Security Administration, for example, produced documentaries of American agricultural life.

Some Hollywood studios concentrated on optimistic films about common people who triumphed over evil, such as the Columbia Pictures movie Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939). Comedies were very popular, too. In this era, the zany Marx Brothers produced such comic classics as Monkey Business (1931) and Duck Soup (1933), both of which had first premiered as stage shows.

The greatest box-office hits were movies that distracted Americans from the gloom of the Depression. The Wizard of Oz, released in 1939, allowed viewers to escape to a whole different world. Moviegoers flocked to musicals that featured large orchestras and lavishly choreographed dance numbers. No one understood the needs of Depression-era audiences better than Walt Disney, whose Mickey Mouse cartoons delighted moviegoers everywhere. Disney also released the classic cartoon Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1938) during this period.

The WPA and the Arts FDR believed that the arts were not luxuries that people should have to give up in hard times. For this reason, he earmarked WPA funds to support unemployed artists, musicians, historians, theater people, and writers. The Federal Writers' Project, established in 1935, assisted more than 6,000 writers, including Richard Wright, Saul Bellow, Margaret Walker, and Ralph Ellison. Historians with the project surveyed the nation's local government records, wrote state guidebooks, and collected life stories from about 2,000 former slaves.

Other government projects supported music and the visual arts. The Federal Music Project started community symphonies and organized free music lessons. It also sent music specialists to lumber camps and small towns to collect and preserve a fast-disappearing folk music heritage.

The Federal Art Project, begun in 1935, put thousands of artists to work. They painted some 2,000 murals, mainly in public buildings. They also produced about 100,000 other paintings, 17,000 sculptures, and many other works of art. The Federal Theatre Project, directed by Vassar College Professor Hallie Flanagan, was the most controversial project. Flanagan used drama to create awareness of social problems. Her project launched the careers of many actors, playwrights, and directors who later became famous, including Burt Lancaster, Arthur Miller, John Houseman, and Orson Welles.

Accusing the Federal Theatre Project of being a propaganda machine for international communism, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) investigated the project in 1938 and 1939. In July 1939, Congress eliminated the project's funding.

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