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How did the aged, unions, and African Americans fare in the 1930s?

CHAPTER 22

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A New Deal for America

The Great Depression, 1929–1940

When Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) accepted the Democratic nomination for president in 1932, he promised to remember “the forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid.” FDR won the election and took office in the throes of the Great Depression, the most devastating and longest economic crisis in American history. Four years later the photographer Walker Evans traveled to Alabama to document the hardships of three struggling sharecropping families. While there he photographed Floyd Burroughs, who spent his days toiling in the cotton fields alongside his wife and children. For seven years, through the worst of the Depression crisis, Burroughs had struggled to provide the minimal basic needs for his family without government help.

To gain public support for new government programs designed to help sharecroppers, the Farm Security Administration had commissioned this and photos like it to show Americans the faces of poverty-stricken farmers. Evans’s portrait of the “forgotten man” aroused more than sympathy, however.

Americans had different visions of how the government should respond to the crisis, and throughout the 1930s, political debate centered on whether and how much the government should intervene. Presidents Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt both championed initiative, freedom, and opportunity. They disagreed, however, over what government action preserved or destroyed these values. In the early thirties Hoover, who preferred minimal government intervention in the economy, took a few historic steps by lending money to banks and businesses and helping farmers. More attuned to the public mood, Roosevelt initiated a broad array of public works programs and social reforms to satisfy the demand for direct government intervention in the economy.

Taken together, policy initiatives by Hoover and Roosevelt paved the way for a complete transformation of the federal government’s role in American society. The New Deal did not end the Depression; that honor belonged to World War II. It was, however, one of the most important periods of legislative activity in American history.

Farmers, migrants, and industrial workers did not just passively wait for help during these hard times. They demanded a “new deal” from the federal government that alleviated the sufferings of common people. Organized labor and charismatic populist politicians on the left helped create a groundswell of support for active government intervention in the economy. The Great Depression, therefore, was not just the story of unrelenting hardship. The era also had moments of triumph for ordinary Americans, like Burroughs, who found their political voice.

“I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a new deal
for the American people”

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, 1932



The Early Days of the Depression



In 1928, the future looked rosy to most Americans, and even President Herbert Hoover believed that permanent prosperity was at hand. Americans venerated Hoover as the “Great Humanitarian” when he began his term. He left four years later amid bitter denunciations that he cared more for banks than for people, earning him the new nickname of the “Great Scrooge.”

The causes of the Depression were complex, giving rise to competing visions over what action, if any, the government should take and how far it should go to engineer an economic recovery. Hoover went further than any other president to date in offering federal assistance to businesses and farmers, but by 1932 his awkward manner along with his refusal to approve direct governmental relief made him appear uncaring to most Americans.

Herbert Hoover

Herbert Hoover’s personal story was a classic rags-to-riches tale that reaffirmed faith in the American Dream. Orphaned at the age of nine, he later recalled that “my boyhood ambition was to be able to earn my own living, without the help of anybody, anywhere.” This personal ethos shaped his lifelong political views.

Starting as a mine laborer working for \$2.50 a day, by the age of 40 Hoover was a respected engineer with millions in the bank. During World War I he became the country’s most famous humanitarian, when he served as food administrator and organized relief missions to help feed hungry Belgians under German occupation during the war and more starving Europeans after it. Hoover’s organizational talents and dedication to good works inspired such awe that the first time his name ever appeared on a ballot in 1928, he won by a landslide, becoming president of the United States. Hoover was a poor public speaker, lacked charisma, and closely guarded his private life. But when he became president, he enjoyed immense popularity. After all, Hoover was a success in business, he had fed starving people, he had been a dynamic secretary of commerce under presidents Harding and Coolidge, and he believed that people would do the right thing once the government showed them the way.

Like most Americans, Hoover believed that able-bodied individuals should make their own way in the world. He maintained that if the government

stepped in too often to manage the economy, individuals and businesses lost their initiative. For Hoover individualism meant more than individuals selfishly pursuing their own well-being. He felt that Americans and American business also had a responsibility to serve the community; like Progressive reformers he believed that self-interest often caused great harm to others (see Chapter 18). Hoover, however, did not share the Progressive desire to use government regulation to solve economic problems. He envisioned a more cooperative, voluntary ap-

“Just making money isn’t enough.”

HERBERT HOOVER, explaining his decision to leave a lucrative engineering career for public service

proach. Instead of passing more laws, Hoover wanted the government to organize meetings, so industrialists, labor, and farmers could craft their own agreements to address issues such as overproduction, price wars, low wages, and strikes. The beginning of the Depression gave the country a chance to


see if Hoover’s voluntary and cooperative approach to economic problems could stem the crisis.

Economic Weaknesses in a Time of Prosperity

The economic downturn in 1929 took the country by surprise. However, a hard look at the twenties reveals that problems in the nation’s economy existed even during the boom years, both in large-scale industries and on family farms.

Some industries, especially textiles and mining, suffered throughout the twenties from overproduction and falling demand. By 1929, even the

What qualities made Hoover a popular president when he was first elected?

 Watch the Video *Prosperity of the 1920s and the Great Depression*

automobile, construction, and appliance industries found it difficult to turn a profit. Cooling demand for automobiles soon rippled outward to industries such as steel and rubber. Some of the reasons for the slump lay in the unequal distribution of income in American society. From 1923 to 1929, corporate profits rose 62 percent, while workers' hourly wages increased by only eight percent. With economic growth now linked to consumer spending, the limited purchasing power of working-class Americans contributed to the growing financial crisis.

High tariffs (taxes levied against imported products) kept foreign-made goods expensive, protecting American companies from overseas competition. Foreign countries responded by levying high tariffs against American goods, reducing overseas markets for U.S. companies. When demand for American-made goods declined at home, American companies were slow to lower prices. By the time they did, demand had fallen so dramatically that massive layoffs were inevitable. As the chances for making money in manufacturing lessened, investors stopped buying industrial stocks. This loss of capital further dampened manufacturers' efforts to recover their earlier momentum. Together, these problems revealed an ailing industrial sector.

More evident problems existed in agriculture. Farmers' boom times had come during World War I, when high demand, generous prices, and easy access to credit induced many to expand their crop production. When the war ended and demand fell, farmers were left with debts, larger farms, and falling crop prices. The long-term trend toward mechanized farming also contributed to the country's looming agricultural crisis. With tractors, farmers could plow and harvest more land on a daily basis. The ability to grow more crops, more easily, paradoxically hurt farmers because overproduction drove prices down even further.

Even before the Depression officially began, Hoover had devised a plan to help farmers escape the vicious cycle of over-production and low prices that kept them from sharing in the prosperity of the twenties. The Agricultural Marketing Act (1929) created a Farm Board with the power to buy and store crops to reduce the harvest-time market glut, which lowered crop prices. In keeping with his ethos of self-help, Hoover expected farmers to do their part to keep agricultural prices high by growing less. These measures, however, were too little, too late. Unsure about what his neighbors would do, no farmer wanted to be the only one to reduce his crop and then suffer both low prices *and* a small harvest. The nation's farmers continued to plant crops in record numbers.

“In the 93 years of my life, depressions have come and gone. Prosperity has always returned and will again.”

**Oil Magnate J. D. ROCKEFELLER,
doubting the need for government action**

The Stock Market Crash of 1929

These underlying problems all laid the foundation for an economic downturn, but by themselves did not predict a worldwide depression. Any chances for a mild recession disappeared in the **stock market crash of 1929**, a ten-day period beginning on October 20, 1929, when the value of stocks plummeted as panicked investors sold off their stock in droves. This is usually considered the official start of the Depression.

Before the crash the stock market promised investors easy profits. When investors buy stock, they own pieces of the company and receive dividends (their share of the profits). Normally the price of a share fluctuates in relation to the expected profitability of the company. By the late 1920s, however, speculators, who did not care about holding on to their share purchases to earn dividends, had taken over the stock market. Instead, they sold their shares as soon as the share price rose.

The epidemic of speculation created three key financial problems:

1. The influx of money into the stock market inflated share prices to such an extent that a stock's price soon bore little relation to the actual worth of a company.
2. Many speculators bought on margin, the name given to the short-term loans used to purchase stock, and planned to cover these loans by quickly reselling their shares at a higher price. When stock prices began to fall, too many investors could not pay these debts.
3. Many investors were speculating with other people's money, funds from ordinary Americans' savings accounts that banks used to finance speculative stock market purchases. That explains why, although only 10 percent of Americans actually owned stock, the life savings of millions disappeared in October 1929.

Why did farmers not prosper in the 1920s?

On Monday, October 20, 1929, the downward spiral began. Stock prices plummeted three days later on Black Thursday when a record 12.9 million shares changed hands. On Black Tuesday the following week, October 29, 1929, 16 million shares were traded and losses totaled \$14 billion. That evening James Rosenberg, a Wall Street bankruptcy lawyer who was also an artist, etched an expressionist portrait of the chaotic scenes he had witnessed.

Rosenberg's Oct. 29 *Dies Irae (Day of Wrath)* 1929 (22.1) captured the panic that swept Wall Street as investors raced to the New York Stock Exchange. In the lithograph the nation's financial institutions teeter on the verge of collapse, frightened crowds gather in the streets, and dark clouds hover over a sky filled with stockbrokers jumping to their deaths. Throughout the crisis rumors circulated about ruined investors committing suicide by leaping from

the city's skyscrapers, and ambulance sirens wailed continually as crews responded to false alarms.



22.1 Oct. 29 *Dies Irae (Day of Wrath)* 1929

To convey the panic that swept Wall Street after the stock market crashed, James Rosenberg employed apocalyptic biblical imagery traditionally used to depict God's wrath as the world comes to an end. The photo shows investors racing to the New York Stock Exchange. [Source (left): James N. Rosenberg, American, (b. 1874). Oct 29 Dies Irae, 1929, Lithograph. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Lola Downin Peck Fund]



What factors led to the stock market crash in 1929?

Hoover's Response to the Depression

When the stock market crashed, no one knew that this was the beginning of a ten-year ordeal. The Great Depression lasted from 1929 to 1939, the most devastating and longest economic crisis in American history. In the 1920s, the federal government played a relatively minor role in the economy, and conservative businessmen urged Hoover to keep it that way. Do nothing, the laissez-faire capitalists told the president, setting in motion a political debate over government intervention that would dominate the Depression era.

Rejecting the laissez-faire suggestion, Hoover envisioned the government fostering a spirit of teamwork that encouraged Americans to work together as the nation weathered the

economic downturn. In keeping with his ideas of service-minded individualism, he brought the leaders of banking, industry, and labor to the White House and urged them to do their bit to keep the economy afloat. Responding to Hoover's plea, industry agreed not to lay off workers or cut wages, and labor leaders accepted a shorter workday to create more jobs. Hoover asked state governments to accelerate their road and public building projects to add jobs in their communities.

Hoover also stepped up hiring for long-planned federal construction projects including the Hoover Dam in the West and asked Congress to extend the tariff on manufactured goods to agricultural imports. Congress complied in 1930, raising tariffs to their highest level ever. When other nations retaliated with their own high tariffs, American companies and farmers lost overseas markets. As a result the world and the United States plunged deeper into economic depression.

In orchestrating this unprecedented federal response to an economic depression, Hoover stayed within limits acceptable to conservatives. Most fiscal conservatives wanted government-built roads and a high protective tariff and preferred non-governmental solutions to economic problems. When it came to helping needy citizens directly, Hoover went no further than asking local governments and charities to assume their traditional role of distributing food and clothing to the poor. This stance surprised Hoover's Progressive supporters, given his previous triumph organizing massive international relief efforts to feed hungry Europeans during and after World War I. It was not a question of helping people, Hoover asserted. "It is solely a question of the best method by which hunger and cold shall be prevented," he explained. To Hoover the American tradition of self-help made relief the responsibility of local governments and charities.

When the crisis entered its second year, U.S. Steel announced a ten percent wage cut. Other companies followed suit, and within ten days American business had slashed millions of workers' wages and begun massive layoffs. The nation's deepening financial woes convinced Hoover to lend federal money to businesses and states. This decision was a dramatic break from past practice. In previous financial panics and depressions, private bankers had put up the money needed for recovery, and presidents had cut federal spending to ensure a balanced budget. In 1932, by proposing a direct economic role for the government in ending the Depression, Herbert Hoover—the man who wanted to decrease

How did Hoover respond to the initial economic crisis?

22.2 Bread Line—No One Has Starved (1932)

Breadlines became an iconic symbol of Depression-era suffering when private charities began providing free meals to the unemployed. Rather than forming bonds with one another over their shared plight, the men in this drawing remain isolated islands of desperation.



Americans' reliance on the government to solve their problems—went further than any previous peacetime president in similar circumstances.

By providing money to banks, insurance companies, farm mortgage associations, and railroads through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) Act of 1932, Hoover helped institutions that were vital to the prosperity of any community. In its first year the government loaned more than \$1.5 billion to these businesses, but little relief trickled down to workers. When critics pressured the president to provide direct help to those without work or food, Hoover responded with the Emergency Relief Act (1932), which lent money to the states for public works programs. Although his farm program, the RFC, and state loans failed to bring about recovery, Hoover had unknowingly set a precedent for direct governmental management of the economy that Franklin D. Roosevelt would expand. “We didn’t admit it at the time, but practically the whole New Deal was extrapolated from programs that Hoover started,” Rexford Tugwell, a key advisor to FDR, later acknowledged.

Reginald Marsh’s *Bread Line—No One Has Starved* (22.2) depicts a group of downtrodden men waiting for a free meal, visual evidence of the growing crisis. The hunched posture of these former wage-earners symbolizes the shame associated with accepting charity. The men stand close together to keep their place in line, but do not converse or even look at each other. Keeping their hands in their pockets, they have been paralyzed by poverty. Marsh based his title on Hoover’s remark that “no one is

actually starving.” The president had hoped to boost morale, but Marsh’s satire portrayed Hoover as out of touch with reality.

With unemployment hovering around 20 percent in 1932, Hoover’s popularity declined steadily. Shantytowns constructed by the homeless became known as “Hoovervilles,” and people waved “Hooverflags” (empty pockets turned inside out) in street protests. A well-circulated joke began with Hoover asking an aide for a nickel to call a friend from a public telephone. “Here,” said the man, tossing him a dime, “call them both.”

In the 1932 presidential campaign, Hoover faced off against FDR, a fifth cousin of Theodore Roosevelt. In sharp contrast to how he would govern, Franklin D. Roosevelt ran a fairly conservative campaign and let Hoover’s missteps win him the election. One of those mistakes was the violent eviction of war veterans from the nation’s capital. Throughout the summer of 1932, the **Bonus March**, a two-month-long demonstration by 40,000 impoverished World War I veterans and their families in Washington, D.C. transfixed the nation. The veterans demanded early payment of a bonus promised them by Congress. The Bonus March ended violently when the army expelled the protesters using tanks, cavalry, and troops with fixed bayonets, further damaging Hoover’s popularity at a key moment during the presidential campaign. *Choices and Consequences: Evicting the Bonus Marchers* explores how Hoover lost control of the decision to evict the Bonus Marchers from the city and paid the consequences.

What innovative solutions did Hoover propose as the economic crisis continued?

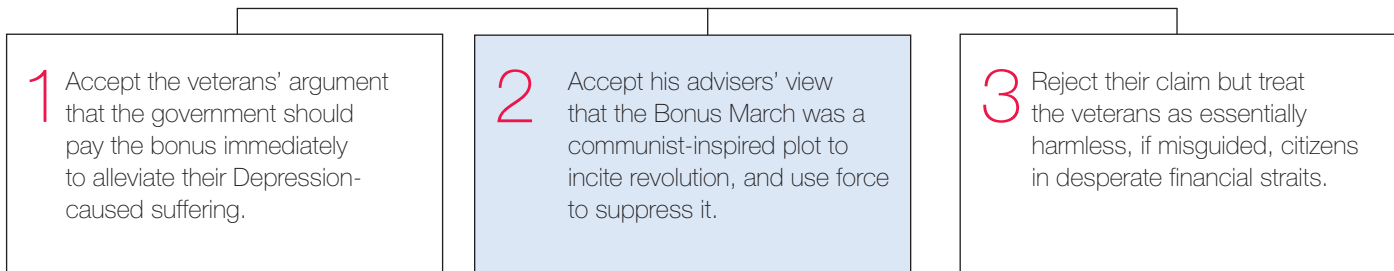
 [View the Image](#) Children with “Hoover’s Poor Farm” Sign

Choices and Consequences

EVICTING THE BONUS MARCHERS

In 1924, World War I veterans had received a federal bond certificate (worth an average of \$1,500) set to mature in 1945. In May, 1932, veterans and their families arrived en masse in the nation’s capital to demand immediate payment of this bonus. They set up a huge “Hooverville” of makeshift shacks and tents and staged continuous demonstrations on the Capitol steps. Hoover faced three choices about how to deal with the demonstration, depending on what interpretation of the protest he embraced.

Choices



Decision

While many in the general public and press viewed the Bonus Marchers as down-on-their-luck citizens, Hoover grew convinced that they were a

dangerous, radical force. After a skirmish between veterans and the police in August, Hoover opted to send in troops with instructions to restore order.

Consequences

Once the troops were deployed, Chief of Staff General Douglas MacArthur exceeded Hoover’s orders and decided to drive the veterans out of the city using tear gas, tanks, and bayonets. Hoover

never publicly revealed MacArthur’s insubordination. When Franklin D. Roosevelt heard of the violent eviction, he reportedly told an adviser, “Well, Felix, this will elect me.”

Continuing Controversies

Was the government right to use force to evict the Bonus Marchers?

To justify the eviction, the White House mounted a furious public relations campaign that included false accusations of discovering dynamite in the main veterans’ encampment. Some upper-class Americans applauded the government’s actions, hoping to dampen any revolutionary impulse among the poor. But many working- and middle-class Americans saw their own destroyed lives in the smoldering ruins of the veterans’ shantytown and turned against Hoover for refusing to aid men who had served the nation loyally.



The Ruins of a Bonus Army Encampment (1932)

Why was Hoover’s choice to evict the bonus marchers significant?

A New President and a New Deal



FDR became president in 1933 during the lowest moment of the Depression with 25 percent of the workforce unemployed. Half of those with home mortgages had defaulted on their loans, and the entire banking system appeared ready to collapse. Empathy for the common people encouraged FDR to act, but so did fear that a social revolution might result if Washington did nothing for them. “I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a new deal for the American people,” FDR had proclaimed during his campaign. He entered office dedicated to protecting America as a capitalist society, and his vision of government activism came under severe scrutiny from both sides of the political spectrum.

FDR: The Politician

“Only a foolish optimist can deny the dark realities of the moment,” noted FDR upon taking office in 1933. If Roosevelt had a mandate for anything, it was for bold action. He met that expectation with


the **New Deal**, an avalanche of legislation from 1933 to 1938 intended to promote economic recovery, reform American capitalism, and offer security to ordinary Americans. The chart “Key New Deal Legislation” (**22.3**) shows the most significant laws passed under Roosevelt’s watch.

Having campaigned as a fiscal conservative who would balance the budget, FDR did not have a blueprint for ending the Depression when he came into office. He did, however, have a fairly well-shaped social philosophy. “He had a profound feeling for the underdog, ... a very keen awareness that political democracy could not exist side by side with economic plutocracy,” according to a key adviser. “We are going to make a country,” the president told a Cabinet member, “in which no one is left out.” FDR sought advice for specific programs and regulations from the Brain Trust, leading academics who served as presidential advisers in the early years of the New Deal. The Brain Trust wanted to revive the Progressive-era practice of using government regulation to solve economic problems and protect the common good (see Chapter 18). Brain Trust members Raymond Moley, Rexford Tugwell, and Adolf Berle diagnosed under-consumption as the main cause of the Depression, blaming the unequal distribution of income, the farm crisis, rigid prices, and low wages as the key culprits. This cartoon (**22.4**) depicts the conservative complaint that the Brain Trust hurt the country with New Deal programs intended to correct these economic problems. Posing as doctors, these professors have anesthetized the country with propaganda. Now the patient lies on an operating table oblivious to the knives and drills about to destroy his body. Besides attacking the New Deal as a set of unwise experiments, the cartoon touches on conservatives’ concern that too much government involvement in the economy

22.3 Key New Deal Legislation

1933	Reconstruction Finance Corporation Businesses and banks receive federal loans
1933	National Industrial Recovery Act Allows business to set price, wage, and production codes
1933	Agricultural Adjustment Act Pays farmers to plant less to raise crop prices
1933	Civilian Conservation Corps Employs young men in reforestation and construction
1933	Public Works Administration Construction projects provide work relief to poor
1933	Glass-Steagall Act of 1933 Insures bank deposits; separates commercial and investment banking
1933	Tennessee Valley Authority Brings electricity to rural areas; stops devastating floods
1935	Social Security Act Guarantees eligible workers a pension and unemployment insurance; aid to disabled and married women with dependent children
1935	Wagner Act Offers government protection to unions
1935	Works Progress Administration Extensive public works program employs 8 million ranging from artists to construction workers
1938	Fair Labor Standards Act Establishes federal minimum wage and maximum working hours per week

How did the competing social philosophies of Hoover and FDR differ?

 [View the Image](#) John Baer, “We Demand a New Deal!” (1931)



22.4 Conservatives Attack the New Deal

This 1934 cartoon mocks the Brain Trust for experimenting with the nation's well-being, implying that New Deal policy initiatives did more harm than good.

(like too many pointless operations) would do more harm than good.

In formulating his policies FDR leaned on another critical adviser: his wife. Eleanor Roosevelt served as the president's "eyes and ears" by traveling around the country and reporting to him what she observed. In 1933 First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt traveled 30,000 miles visiting Americans where they worked and lived. Two years later, the *Washington Star* felt it newsworthy to print the headline "Mrs. Roosevelt Spends the Night at the White House."

Over time Eleanor Roosevelt became more outspoken in advancing causes dear to her heart concerning racial injustice and poverty. She invited prominent African Americans to the White House to talk directly to the president about civil rights. Eleanor Roosevelt's visible participation in political affairs set her apart from former First Ladies, who had mainly served as official hostesses at White House functions. Her activism opened up political opportunities for other women. There were many firsts for women in the thirties: first ambassador, first judge on the Court of Appeals, and first cabinet secretary, Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins.

"If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something."

FDR's approach to shaping the New Deal

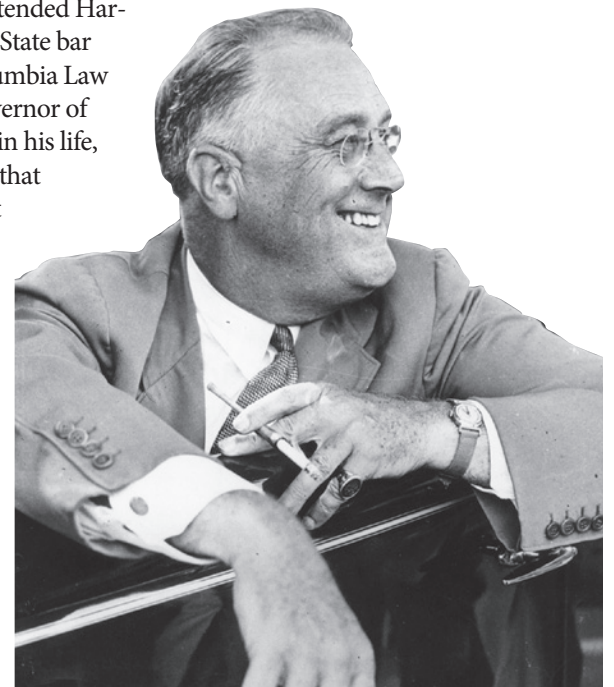
Americans differed in their reactions to Eleanor Roosevelt's left-leaning political activities. Conservative detractors advised her to "stay at home and make a home for your husband." Her civil rights activism particularly upset southern Democrats in Congress. She had equally ardent supporters and consistently won a two-thirds approval rating in Gallup polls—often bettering her husband. Thousands of Americans wrote to her each week, to ask for financial help, or to praise her work.

Like his wife, FDR connected well with the public. Throughout his presidency FDR used weekly radio addresses that he called "fireside chats" to speak directly to the nation. After the president's death in 1945, people stopped Eleanor on the street to tell her how much "they missed the way the President used to talk to them. They'd say, 'He used to talk to me about my government,'" she recalled. FDR was often photographed smiling and smoking from an elegant-looking cigarette holder (22.5), and the public found his visible cheerfulness refreshing.

FDR infused hope into a time of trouble and confusion. Yet little in his background suggested that he would understand the plight of common people. The only son of doting, wealthy parents who imbued him with tremendous self-confidence, the athletic, charming, and brilliant FDR attended Harvard and passed the New York State bar exam after just one year at Columbia Law School. In 1929, he became governor of New York. A personal tragedy in his life, however, convinced the public that FDR understood what it meant to overcome adversity. In 1921, at the age of 39, polio left him partially paralyzed for the rest of his life, and in pain much of the time. His disability "made it possible for the common people to trust him to understand what it is to be handicapped by poverty and ignorance, as well as by physical misfortune," Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins noted.

22.5 FDR's Trademark Cigarette Holder and Smile

Most Americans found FDR's cheerfulness reassuring, and he inspired confidence in America's security and future prosperity.



Hear the Audio File *FDR's First Inaugural Address*

What role did Eleanor Roosevelt play during her husband's administrations?

Managing Appearances

Although FDR benefited from people knowing that he had overcome a misfortune, he also believed that visual images of his handicap would convey the impression that he was weak and physically unfit for his responsibilities. He made a personal and political decision to conceal his paralysis. To hide his heavy leg braces, FDR wore extra long pants and had the visible portion of the braces painted black to blend with his shoes. He learned to stand upright by holding onto a cane with one hand and the arm of an aide, usually his son, with the other (22.6). He would then use his hips to swing his legs forward in a semi-arch to give the illusion of walking. All of this required tremendous physical exertion. James Roosevelt later noted that he often had bruises on his arms from the force of his father's grip. Father and son disguised their physical effort by smiling and joking as they "walked" together before audiences.

Away from the crowds, aides carried FDR up stairs or from the car to a wheelchair. In public he often used his automobile as a prop to hide his disability, and by holding a bar installed in the backseat of an open touring car, he could pull himself up to address crowds. At one stadium rally a ramp was constructed so that the president's car could be driven onto the stage in the center of the field. FDR gave his speech without leaving the car.

The press obeyed White House rules that prohibited taking photos of the president in a wheelchair or being carried. As a result there are only two known photographs of FDR in a wheelchair. This

22.6 FDR Walking

Shunning his wheelchair, candidate FDR holds onto his son's arm as the two greet supporters during his first presidential campaign in 1932.



22.7 FDR Running

Political cartoons never showed the president's physical disabilities. [Reproduced with permission of *The Kansas City Star* © Copyright 2007 *The Kansas City Star*. All rights reserved. Format differs from original publication. Not an endorsement.]

self-censorship even extended to political cartoons, which never once depicted the president as incapacitated. Instead, these caricatures usually portrayed an energetic FDR running or jumping like this 1936 caricature from the *Kansas City Star* (22.7), in which a sprinting FDR replicates Benjamin Franklin's kite-flying experiment to bring electricity to the rural poor.

The Temper of the Poor: Passivity and Anger

Hoover kept his distance from common people and paid the price. FDR was a more astute politician. But what was the temper of the people he needed

“There is something about the first anniversary of your layoff which makes you feel more hopeless.”

A worker during the Great Depression



How and why did FDR manage his political image?

to help? Two competing images of the poor soon emerged. One emphasized their helplessness and suffering; the other saw them as teetering on the brink of revolt.

Countless government investigators detailed the plight of hardworking family men suddenly without jobs. “I find them all in the same shape—fear, fear driving them into a state of semi-collapse; cracking nerves; and an overpowering terror of the future,” reported one social worker. Many Americans chose to suffer silently, making their own decisions about how to cope, sometimes blaming themselves rather than the Depression for their troubles. This portrait by Dorothea Lange (22.8) conveys this “quiet desperation” of the poor. In Lange’s image an unemployed man grasps his empty tin cup and leans over the rail as if he is kneeling at a church altar praying for salvation. The man’s plight is moving, but his passivity is also vaguely reassuring to those who feared angry demonstrations or social revolution.

As the Bonus March revealed, however, not all Americans were waiting patiently for conditions to improve. Federal investigator Lorena Hickok feared that a social revolution was brewing: “I still feel that vast numbers of unemployed in Pennsylvania are ‘right on the edge,’ so to speak—that it wouldn’t take much to make Communists out of them.” The Communist Party hoped that she was right. Unlike Roosevelt and his conservative critics, Communists had no interest in saving capitalism. They hoped that the crisis would provoke a social revolt that abolished private property. The 1930s were the “heyday of American Communism,” as the party grew from 7,000 members in 1930 to 100,000 in 1939. Across the country Communists organized unemployed councils that blocked evictions from city apartments, mounted hunger marches, and reconnected gas and electricity lines for workers who could not pay their bills.

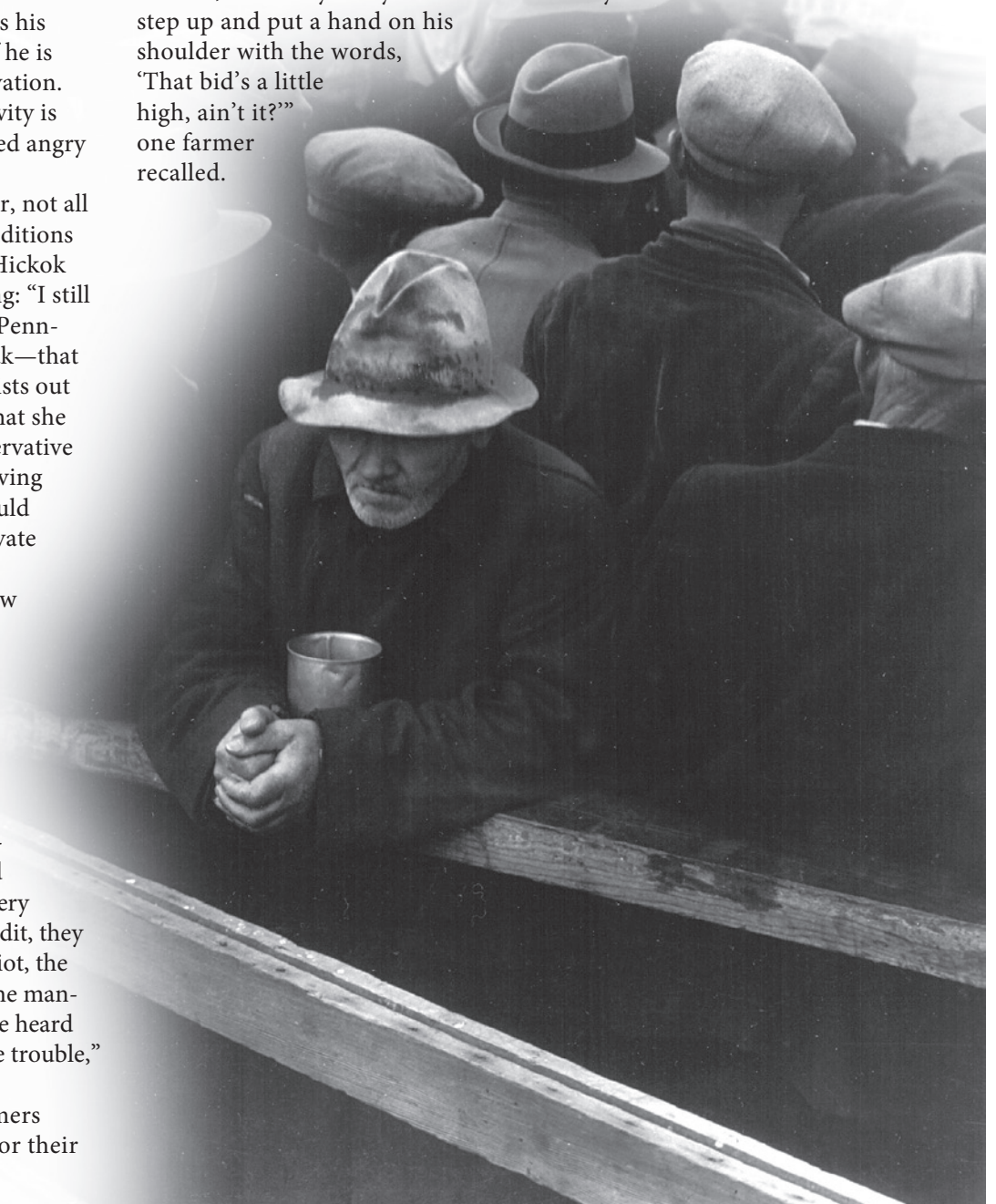
Grocery store robberies were also common, although newspapers rarely reported these crimes. When the manager of a grocery store in Detroit denied a group of men credit, they ransacked his store. Witnessing the food riot, the novelist John Dos Passos wondered why the manager did not call the police. “If more people heard about affairs like this, there would be more trouble,” the manager replied.

While the urban poor stole food, farmers demonstrated to demand higher prices for their

crops. Across the Midwest farmers disrupted food shipments by blocking highways with logs and pouring milk onto roads. When banks seized land, cattle, or farm machinery from farmers who defaulted on their loans, they needed help from the police to ensure that public sales of the confiscated property went smoothly. At some farm auctions farmers devised an effective strategy to help their neighbors by offering only a penny for the property on sale. Nooses hung on barn doors at penny auctions warned prospective buyers that bidding on a farm family’s possessions would not be wise. “If anyone in the farmyard might be so ignorant of what was going on as to put in a serious bid, a suitably burly man would be likely to step up and put a hand on his shoulder with the words, ‘That bid’s a little high, ain’t it?’” one farmer recalled.

22.8 “Breadline” San Francisco, 1933

The man’s empty cup symbolized his pervasive hunger. His unthreatening pose created sympathy for his plight, while the militant poor provoked fears of social revolution.



What competing responses did the poor offer to the ongoing Depression?

Recovering from the Depression



“First of all,” FDR stated in his first inaugural address, “let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” These courageous words inspired confidence in the country’s new leader at a time when financial institutions were on the brink of collapse. Jump-starting the economy involved restoring confidence in the banking system, putting people to work, and keeping businesses afloat. Following Hoover’s lead, FDR established a cooperative relationship between the government and business and provided federal money for banks and businesses. But unlike Hoover, he was willing to provide jobs through extensive public works programs and to fund temporary direct relief for average citizens.

Revamping Banking and Financial Institutions

By the time FDR took office, Americans had lost nearly \$2.5 billion in 9,000 bank failures. The new president declared an immediate bank holiday on March 6, 1933, that closed the nation’s banks for a week. An obedient Congress quickly passed emergency banking legislation that allowed only banks with the Federal Reserve’s stamp of approval to reopen. “I can assure you that it is safer to keep your money in a reopened bank than under the mattress,” FDR told the public in his first fireside address. When the “holiday” ended, millions of Americans demonstrated their faith in the president by depositing more money than they withdrew in the weeks that followed. “Capitalism,” a FDR adviser said later, “was saved in [those] eight days.”

“It was the Government’s job to straighten out this situation,” FDR told radio listeners. His administration soon proposed more reform measures to inspire public confidence in the nation’s banks. The Glass-Steagall Act of 1933 created the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), insuring the accounts of small depositors in member banks. The FDIC still exists. The same legislation protected the deposits of ordinary Americans by separating investment and commercial banking, so bank officials could no longer make speculative loans or stock purchases with depositors’ money. This provision was repealed in 1999.

Finally, the New Deal tackled the problems caused by an unregulated stock market that had contributed to the crash of 1929. Laws established the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and reformed the practices of buying and selling stock. The SEC required companies to disclose financial

details to potential investors, so they could make an informed stock purchase. The SEC also regulated the practice of buying stocks on margin.

Reforms in home mortgage lending practices probably had a more immediate impact on the lives of ordinary Americans than stock market reform. In 1933, 40 percent of homeowners were on the brink of losing their homes to bank foreclosures. In response FDR created a program that refinanced one out of every ten home mortgages and spread the payments over 20 years instead of the usual five. Designed to encourage Americans to purchase homes (and thereby boost the construction industry), the Federal Housing Authority (FHA), founded in 1934, offered insurance to private lenders who financed home mortgages for new homes. FHA backing allowed creditors to reduce the down payment required, lower interest rates, and lengthen the life of the loan. These government-supported initiatives helped form the modern mortgage-lending practices that enabled the percentage of Americans who owned their own homes to increase by one-third over the next 40 years.

Father Charles Coughlin

Many businessmen and bankers supported these reforms because they renewed public faith in the basic structures of capitalism. With internal squabbles dividing its members, the Communist Party never effectively challenged the New Deal. Instead, the most influential challenger on the left to New Deal banking reforms was Father Charles Coughlin.

A popular “radio priest” from Detroit who spoke with an Irish brogue, Father Coughlin gave sermons on a weekly radio program that drew audiences of 30 to 40 million. In 1934, he received more mail

How did FDR reform the nation’s banking and financial institutions?

 **Read the Document** *Franklin D. Roosevelt—Radio Address (1933)*

than anyone in the United States, including Roosevelt, most of it from adoring fans making donations to Coughlin's cause. Coughlin singled out financiers and international bankers as the culprits who caused the Depression. The popularity of his relentless attacks on the elite helped push FDR increasingly to the left during his first administration.

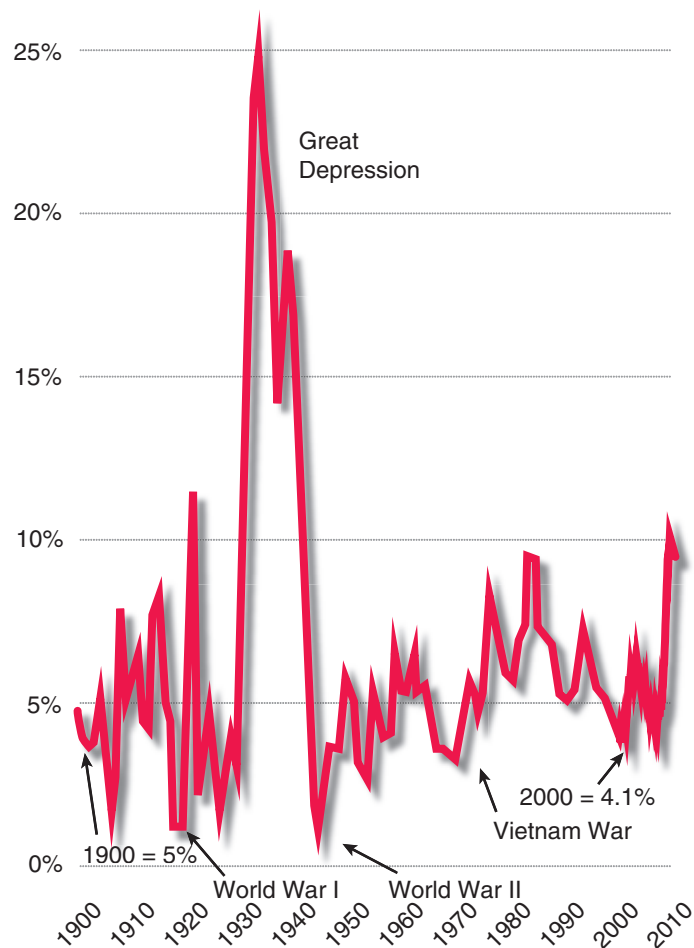
Following the lead of the Populists of the nineteenth century (see Chapter 17), Coughlin focused on how existing currency and banking arrangements helped bankers but hurt the common people. With currency in short supply, average citizens had to work harder to pay off their debts. Putting more money into circulation made sense in the midst of a depression. Bankers, however, held firm to their orthodoxy that all sound economies were based on the gold standard, which required that money be redeemable in gold, thereby limiting the amount of money that the government could print or coin. Coughlin proposed a revaluation of the price of gold and the monetization of silver (letting people also redeem paper money in silver, which was cheaper and more plentiful than gold) to allow the government to put more dollars into circulation. Finally he wanted to nationalize the banks to take money lending out of the hands of private bankers.

Coughlin initially supported the New Deal in sermons like "The New Deal Is Christ's Deal" and praised the president when he took the country off the gold standard in 1933. FDR welcomed Coughlin's support at first but eventually grew tired of the priest's impromptu visits to the White House. As their relationship soured, Coughlin began criticizing the administration for doing too little to rein in powerful banking and capitalist interests. Many of his followers begged him to reconsider his break with FDR, before they withdrew from the short-lived third party that he headed. By 1938, Coughlin's star was in decline. His broadcasts became increasingly strident, filled for the first time with anti-Semitic diatribes against an imagined international Jewish banking conspiracy. He stayed on the air until 1942, when his bishop ordered him to cease all political activities.

Helping Industry and People

Besides shoring up banks, FDR also immediately sought to get people back to work. As the graph (22.9) reveals, FDR faced the most severe jobs crisis in American history. At first he followed in Hoover's footsteps. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation continued to make loans and began buying bank stocks to help banks acquire the liquid capital

Unemployed Persons as a Percentage of the Civilian Labor Force



22.9 Soaring Unemployment

This graph reveals the historically high unemployment rate during the Great Depression. In the 2008–2011 recession, unemployment figures also climbed dramatically amid fears of another depression.

needed to stay open. The National Recovery Administration (NRA), established by the 1933 National Industrial Recovery Act, was the cornerstone of FDR's efforts to devise a Hoover-like cooperative solution to the crisis. Suspending antitrust laws, the NRA established industrial boards for each sector of the economy that brought competitors together to set prices, production quotas, and wages. Architects of the NRA believed these industrial codes would stop manufacturers from cutting wages to subsidize lower prices, a practice that reduced the purchasing power of workers, contributing to overproduction and under-consumption.

When prices rose without a corresponding increase in wages, however, many Americans became unhappy with the NRA. Even the larger corporations that benefited from the price codes remained leery of it, fearful that the agency might force them to negotiate with labor unions. To everyone's relief the Supreme Court declared the NRA unconstitutional in 1935, ruling that it delegated too much

power from the legislative to the executive branch and regulated more than interstate commerce.

FDR's reading of the public mood encouraged him to depart from Hoover's policies and offer direct financial relief to individuals out of work. FDR encouraged Americans to write to him, and in their correspondence destitute Americans bared painful details of their poverty and often asked for specific items, such as a coat or shoes. Attuned to the widespread misery, FDR created the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), which worked with state governments to distribute direct relief to the unemployed.

Although many Americans were grateful for this help, applying for relief or a "dole" was humiliating for previously self-sufficient working people. Even at the height of the Depression, accepting relief carried the stigma of personal failure. Although they envisioned the roots of poverty differently, both conservatives and Progressives viewed relief with suspicion. Conservatives felt that laziness, alcoholism, lack of ambition, and a poor work ethic created a class of indigent poor undeserving of help. Progressives thought that dismal living and working conditions caused the poor to turn to drink or succumb to apathy, but believed that handouts would further discourage workers from trying to support themselves. One could feel sympathy for the poor, therefore, and still worry about the negative consequences of distributing charity or relief.

Like many of his contemporaries, FDR disliked using federal monies to fund direct relief. He always preferred federal programs that employed the poor to those that simply handed out food or money. In 1935, he decided to stop providing direct cash grants to the needy. "To dole out relief in this way is to administer a narcotic, a subtle destroyer of the human spirit," FDR told Congress. From this point on the

states handled relief, while the federal government tackled the problem of putting "employable" persons to work.

Putting People to Work

To the dismay of conservatives and the gratitude of the unemployed, the New Deal created a variety of programs, each administered by a different agency, that provided 15 million jobs during the Depression. The Civil Works Administration (CWA), Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and Public Works Administration (PWA) were all founded in 1933. During its four-month existence, the CWA provided jobs that helped more than four million workers survive the winter of 1933–1934 and stemmed growing unrest among the unemployed. The CCC (which lasted until World War II) focused on giving economically disadvantaged young men a chance to gain work experience. It undertook major reforestation projects, constructed campgrounds, restored historic battlefields, and stocked rivers and lakes with fish. The PWA, run by Harold Ickes, funded public works projects, especially roads and buildings, to help revive the construction industry.

After deciding in 1935 to fund only work relief programs, Roosevelt created the Works Progress Administration. The WPA, managed by Harry Hopkins, was a major public works program that from 1935 to 1943 employed more than eight million workers, one-fifth of the workforce. During its existence, the WPA constructed 200,000 buildings and bridges along with 600,000 miles of roads. It also funded the arts, subsidizing painters and writers. Thanks to massive New Deal government spending on work-relief, and the subsequent strengthening of consumer spending power, the economy began gradually recovering in the mid-thirties.

"I gave the best part of my life to the American country, and I spent every cent I made here. They owe it to me to take care of me."

A worker, happily accepting a WPA job

"I wouldn't plow nobody's mule from sunrise to sunset for 50 cents per day when I could get \$1.30 for pretending to work on a DITCH."

A Georgia farmer, criticizing the WPA work ethic

Who benefited from the wide range of New Deal work-relief programs?

 [View the Image](#) CCC worker (1938)



22.10 *Turning a Corner*

Like most Depression-era post office murals, this one celebrated workers as the backbone of the nation. “My interest,” artist Joe Jones noted, “was in portraying man at work—his job before him—and how he goes about it with his tools—man creating.”

Even permanent government agencies put Americans to work during the Depression. The Treasury Department, for instance, hired artists to decorate post offices throughout the nation. Edward Bruce, who directed the program, wanted to “enrich the lives of all our people” by making “beauty part of their daily lives” when they visited the post office. Post office murals celebrated working Americans and their communities, but eschewed controversial themes like class conflict. In rural areas these murals projected images of prosperous farmers running family farms. Joe Jones painted *Turning a Corner* (22.10) for the Anthony, Kansas, post office, a mural that showed a farmer using a tractor to harvest a field of golden wheat before an approaching storm damaged his crops. The mural made no reference to the drought or dust storms that ravaged farms during the thirties, nor criticized farmers for over-producing and causing crop prices to fall. Instead, Jones celebrated farmers for growing the food that fed the nation and romanticized their relationship with the land.

Americans disagreed over whether work relief was ruining or saving the country. For critics of work relief, the sight of WPA construction crew workers standing around talking instead of working led to jokes that WPA stood for “We Piddle

Around.” Farmers looking for day laborers also complained bitterly that federal work relief often paid more than working in the fields. Many WPA employees, however, saw government-provided jobs as a right that they had earned.

In a 1935 *Fortune* magazine survey, nearly 90 percent of lower-middle-class and working-class respondents answered yes when asked, “Do you believe that the government should see to it that every man who wants to work has a job?” Roosevelt agreed to a point. He consistently tried to terminate these programs at the slightest sign of recovery to rein in deficit spending, remaining true to his conservative fiscal values. The government reduced funds to the WPA when unemployment dropped in 1937 to 7.7 million from a high of 12.8 million in 1933. However, the sharp reduction in government spending, combined with new taxes and higher interest rates, caused the fledgling recovery to grind to a halt. During the subsequent 1937 recession, automobile production declined by 50 percent, steel by 70 percent, rubber by 40 percent, and the unemployment rate rose to 9.5 million (17 percent of the working population). With no federal funds for new relief projects available, New Jersey issued licenses to beg on the streets. The next year FDR restored public works funding.

 **View the Closer Look** *Images as History: Post Office Murals*

What competing visions arose over New Deal work relief programs?

A New Deal for Farmers



New Deal public works programs dotted the American landscape with new roads, bridges, murals, and dams, a lasting legacy of Depression-era recovery efforts. Reforms in the agricultural sector also outlived the immediate crisis, part of FDR's commitment to save American capitalism and create "greater security for the average man than he has ever known before in the history of America." Americans from all walks of life, however, questioned the government's desire to help displaced farm workers.

Handling the Farm Crisis

Assisting farmers protected an American way of life that had strong mythic connections to the nation's beginnings as a land of opportunity. Farmers received more direct aid than any other group during the Depression. The Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) of 1933 tried to ensure that farmers earned an adequate income by paying them to take land out of cultivation, which the administration hoped would cause crop prices to rise. When reducing acreage failed to sufficiently lower output, FDR approved laws that established marketing quotas for each commodity. If farmers tried to sell more than their allotted quota, they were hit with a heavy fine.

The administration departed temporarily from this approach when the Supreme Court ruled the AAA unconstitutional in 1936. The Court decided that the tax on food-processing plants used to

finance the acreage-reduction program violated the Tenth Amendment by usurping regulatory rights reserved for the states. Congress passed a second AAA in 1938, but by the mid-1930s the problems facing farmers in parts of the country had changed.

In the **Dust Bowl** drought and soil erosion caused massive dust storms across southern and plains states throughout the thirties. During one storm in May 1934, experts estimated that the winds transported 350 million tons of soil from the West to the East. Dust fell like snow on Chicago, the sun was obscured in Washington, D.C., and ships 300 miles out to sea reported dirt settling on their decks. This photo (22.11) captures an approaching dust storm carrying deadly amounts of dirt. Each storm left piles of dead cattle and wildlife

22.11 "Approaching Dust Storm"

Ominous clouds of dirt descend on a small town in Colorado during one of the dust storms that plagued the plains states and the southwest in the thirties. The storms killed livestock and kept people inside for days.



How did FDR tackle the problems of rural America?

 [View the Map](#) Interactive Map: The Great Depression

in its wake as residents barricaded themselves inside their houses with damp towels over their mouths to avoid suffocation or wore Red Cross-provided gas masks. But even these precautions did not completely prevent deaths from occurring when a duster hit.

To encourage better farming practices, the government began paying farmers in the Dust Bowl to plant soil-improving crops like legumes instead of traditional cash crops such as wheat, cotton, and tobacco that exhausted the soil. In one innovative program the government planted 220 million trees in a 100-mile-wide swath from Childress, Texas, to the Canadian border. These trees stopped western dust from traveling east by cooling the air and reducing the wind velocity of dust storms.

Bringing electricity to rural areas was another way the New Deal improved daily life for the rural poor. Most of the urban population had electricity to ease the daily tasks of pumping water and washing clothes, advantages available to only one in ten rural families in 1930. Begun in 1933, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) was a government-owned utility company that provided thousands of jobs as it built dams that generated power, provided flood relief, and created recreational lakes throughout the seven states (Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia) serviced by the Tennessee River. These areas soon enjoyed good fishing, cheap electricity, and relief from debilitating floods.

Government-sponsored low-interest loans enabled rural cooperatives to string electrical lines and manufacture power. “The women went around turning the switches on and off,” noted an observer after one home received its hookup. “The light and wonder in their eyes was brighter than that from the lamps.” By 1941, almost half of all American farms had access to electricity, a figure that rose to 90 percent by 1950.

Native Americans were another rural population aided by New Deal policies. Commissioner for Indian Affairs John Collier pressed successfully for passage of the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act that ended the land allotment policies sanctioned under the 1887 Dawes Act (see Chapter 15) and returned some self-government to Indian reservations. The stage was set for a gradual rebirth of Native American cultures in the twentieth century.

Overall, New Deal subsidies improved farm owners’ lives. Farm income doubled from \$2 billion in 1929 to \$4.6 billion in 1939. Although farmers

still made only 37.5 percent of what nonfarm workers earned, farming had become a much more profitable business. These agricultural policies created unexpected problems, however, by helping landowners at the expense of tenant farmers and farm laborers whose services were no longer needed once the government began paying farm owners to take land out of cultivation. The Farm Security Administration helped a few tenants purchase land, offering share-croppers a way to break out of the traditional cycle of debt that bound them to landowners. But millions of tenant farmers and farm laborers, white and black, had to find their own way out of the crisis.

Hitting the Road

Over 2.5 million farmers hit the road in search of work in the thirties. Besides families traveling together in cars, nearly 250,000 teenagers, usually young men, “rode the rails” by hopping into empty freight cars. Constantly on the move, these youths found companionship in “hobo jungles” (homeless encampments) as they looked for jobs, lived off handouts, and sometimes stole to get by. Nearly 400,000 Americans left farming areas in the middle of the country and headed to California. Old trucks piled high with personal belongings flooded western highways, demonstrating how completely the United States had become a car culture. The United States was “the only Nation in the history of the world that ever went to the poorhouse in an automobile,” quipped the cowboy humorist Will Rogers.

California state officials tried to discourage migrants. Near Tulsa, Oklahoma a billboard on Route 66, the main highway that migrants took west, proclaimed: “NO JOBS in California, If YOU are looking for work—KEEP OUT, 6 men for Every Job, No State Relief Available for Non-Residents.” The signs did little to discourage families from heading to California.

Most new California arrivals settled into the nomadic life of the migrant worker, traveling an average of 516 miles during the six-month harvest season. Despite their dependence on migrant workers to pick the crops, native Californians did not welcome “Okies,” the pejorative term for Dust Bowl refugees, with open arms. “Okies” were now subject to the same kinds of discrimination that migrant workers of Mexican, Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino descent had suffered for years in California. Migrant workers often lived in makeshift roadside camps



Read the Document Carey McWilliams, *Okies in California* (1939)

How did displaced farmers act to improve their own lives?



22.12 Migrants Hit the Road

Rickety trucks piled high with possessions and children filled western highways as families fled the Dust Bowl in search of employment elsewhere.

near disease-ridden water ditches. When the government tried to create camps that offered migrants better and cleaner facilities, some Californians objected. Growers worried that concentrating migrant workers in government-run camps would make it easier for them to organize unions and strikes. Other Californians believed that improving living conditions would draw even more displaced farmers to their state.

In 1935, California-based photographer Dorothea Lange began taking photographs for the Resettlement Administration to document migrant workers' suffering and arouse the public's sympathy. This photo (22.12) shows a father from Arkansas changing the tire on his truck as he and his seven

children followed the crops in Oklahoma and Texas. "We'll be in California yet," he proclaimed. Lange was renowned for her ability to take photographs that revealed her subjects' true feelings. Left lame by polio, she believed that her own disability made strangers trust her. Her photographs, discussed more fully in *Images as History: "Migrant Mother"—An American Icon*, had a distinct political purpose: to cement public support for migrant worker aid programs.

Repatriating Mexican Immigrants

Reducing competition from immigrants seeking work was another way the government tried to help native-born farm workers. In 1929, the government effectively ended legal immigration from Mexico for the duration of the Depression to protect jobs for American citizens. Foreshadowing today's debate over the benefits and drawbacks of immigration, California officials argued that alien workers held jobs that should go to native-born Americans. Owners of large farms disagreed, predicting that they would face a serious labor shortage if they lost their traditional workforce since few Americans wanted these jobs.

Anti-immigration forces prevailed. Faced with the offer of a free trip back to their original homes (financed by the United States and Mexico) or the option of staying in a country where employment options had dwindled, thousands of Mexican workers accepted repatriation. Local and federal officials arrested and then deported others who had entered the country illegally. With the advent of the New Deal, immigrants' interest in voluntary repatriation dwindled. New Deal regulations made legal aliens eligible for food relief, although most public works programs gave jobs only to citizens. Overall approximately 415,000 Mexicans left the United States during the 1930s, both voluntarily and involuntarily.

“Social change is a difficult thing in our civilization unless you have sentiment.”

President FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

What happened to Mexican immigrants during the Depression?

 **Watch the Video** Video Lecture: Dorothea Lange and Migrant Mother

Images as History

“MIGRANT MOTHER”—AN AMERICAN ICON

In March 1936, the photographer Dorothea Lange entered a makeshift migrants' camp and saw a 32-year-old woman sitting with four of her seven children and all the family's possessions. Taking six quick pictures, Lange jotted down notes about the family: “Destitute in pea pickers' camp, Nipomo, California, because of the failure of the early pea crop. These people had just sold their tires in order to buy food. Of the 2,500 people in this camp most of them were destitute.”

Lange's final portrait, “**Migrant Mother**,” was a masterpiece. The viewer has the sense of intruding on an intensely personal moment, but Lange made no apologies for invading this woman's privacy. “She asked me no questions,” the photographer later recalled. Instead, the woman “seemed to know that my pictures might help her, and so she helped me.” When these photographs appeared in the *San Francisco News*, relief authorities immediately sent food to the entire camp of starving pea pickers. “Migrant Mother” and her family, however, had already left the camp. In later years, Florence Thompson, the subject of “Migrant Mother,” tried to suppress the diffusion of this photograph because she felt that it stigmatized her as poor. As she lay dying of cancer in 1983, however, her children used the image to raise funds for their mother's medical expenses.

This initial photograph did not send the clear message that Lange wanted. In subsequent photos she focused on the despair of the mother and her small children rather than their general poverty.

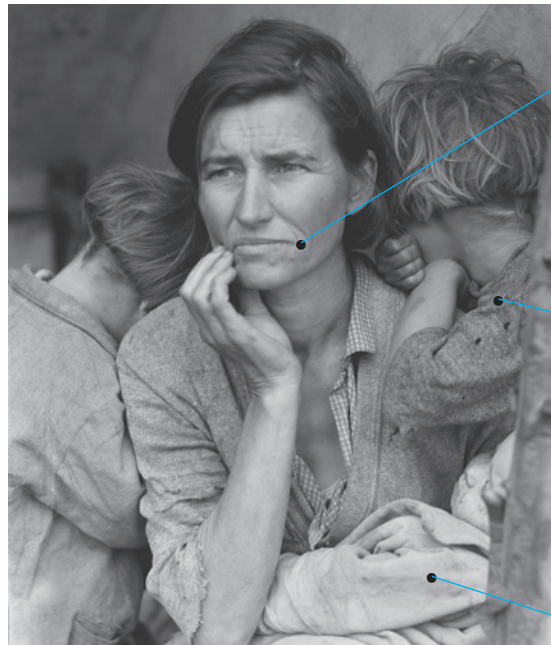
The father was nowhere in sight, conveying either the comforting possibility that he was out looking for work or the disconcerting suggestion that he had abandoned the family.



“Migrant Mother series, no. 2”

The presence of an older daughter raised potentially troublesome questions about when the woman began having children, why she continued to have so many, or why the teenager was not working to help the family.

In her next shots, Lange carefully framed out the open luggage and trash to erase any suggestion that the family lacked discipline.



“Migrant Mother series, no. 6”

Because they wanted their photographs to arouse public sympathy and support for federal aid, government photographers always depicted the migrants as heroic victims. They were never shown smiling, angry, or as responsible for their misery.

As adults Thompson's daughters believed that this image underscored the importance of individual initiative, not the need for federal aid. To make sure that they “never lived like that again, we all worked hard and we all had good jobs and we all stayed with it,” one explained.

Lange's composition suggests “a sort of anti-Madonna and Child,” wrote one critic.

Reforms to Ensure Social Justice



In 1935, the New Deal moved beyond measures intended to help the nation recover from the Depression to policies designed to correct basic inequities in American society and provide security to ordinary Americans. Reforms protected unions, guaranteed many elderly a government pension, established a minimum wage for factory workers, and abolished child labor.

The momentum for these New Deal reforms came from the growing strength of left-leaning politicians, unions, and senior citizens who were unafraid to press FDR to adopt their vision of a more just society.

The Challenge from Huey Long: “Share Our Wealth”

Roosevelt’s move to the left toward the end of his first administration was partially a response to the popularity of Father Coughlin and Senator Huey Long of Louisiana. Before he became a senator, Long was an adored, although corrupt, governor of Louisiana who provided free school textbooks, built roads and hospitals, and curbed the power of the state’s oil industry. “They do not merely vote for him,” a reporter wrote of Louisianans in 1935, “they worship the ground he walks on.”

Long supported the New Deal at first, but his dissatisfaction with the pace of change and his own political ambitions caused a break with FDR. As an alternative to the New Deal, Long proposed his **Share Our Wealth** plan to redistribute money from the rich to the poor. Long wanted to limit every person to \$1 million in income and \$8 million in capital investments each year. The government would confiscate all other personal income and corporate profits and redistribute \$2,000 annually to every American family. Besides offering Americans a guaranteed income, Long also championed old-age pensions, expanded veterans’ benefits, a shorter working day, and government support for education. He created a Share Our Wealth Society and claimed a membership of five million, promising to make “every man a King.”

Long argued that under his plan the rich would still enjoy a life of luxury, and even published a budget for a family of four on \$1 million a year to show that they could easily afford \$10,000 of jewelry each season and a new \$100 suit a day. Yet even the great fortunes amassed by the richest Americans were too small to support the kind of program Long proposed. Despite the flaws in his plan, Long tapped into public anger

at the rich, whom many blamed for causing the Depression, and long-standing resentments about the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. Long never had a chance to challenge FDR as a third-party candidate, however, because a disgruntled man who detested Long assassinated him on the steps of the Louisiana state capitol in the fall of 1935. “I wonder why he shot me,” Long asked before he died, a question the assassin, killed on the spot by Long’s bodyguards, could never answer. *Competing Visions: Sharing the Wealth* explores the Depression-era debate over redistributing income.

Social Security

Alongside the larger-than-life personas of Huey Long and Father Coughlin stood Dr. Francis Townsend, an unassuming sixty-six-year-old physician who organized a campaign for old-age pensions in 1933 after seeing three old women outside his house in Long Beach, California, rummaging through the trash. The combined activism of these three men, and the support each enjoyed, convinced FDR in 1935 to create a comprehensive social-welfare system that protected the aged, the unemployed, and those unable to care for themselves.

Townsend’s call for government pensions for the elderly set in motion a powerful grassroots

“It is hard to be old and not have anything.”

A woman from North Dakota, writing to Roosevelt

How did critics from the left shape the social justice programs of FDR’s second administration?

Competing Visions

SHARING THE WEALTH

Should money be redistributed from the haves to the have-nots? During the Depression, many Americans answered a resounding “yes.” Below are two views, reflecting different visions of how income redistribution might affect American capitalism and democracy. What justification or objection does each give for redistributing wealth throughout the population?

In this 1935 radio address, Senator Huey Long outlines his proposal to redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor.

We find not only the people going further into debt, but that the United States is going further into debt.... And with it all, there stalks a slimy specter of want, hunger, destitution, and pestilence, all because of the fact that in the land of too much and of too much to wear, our president has failed in his promise to have these necessities of life distributed into the hands of the people who have need of them....

But we have been about our work to correct this situation. That is why the Share Our Wealth societies are forming in every nook and corner of America ...

Here is what we stand for in a nutshell:

Number one, we propose that every family in America should ... have a home and the comforts of a home up to a value of not less than around \$5,000 or a little more than that.

Number two, we propose that no family shall own more than three hundred times the average family wealth, which means that no family shall possess more than a wealth of approximately \$5 million—none to own less than \$5,000, none to own more than \$5 million.

Number three,... We propose that no family will have an earning of less than around \$2,000 to \$2,500 and that none will have more than three hundred times the average less the ordinary income taxes, which means that a million dollars would be the limit on the highest income.

We also propose to give the old-age pensions to the old people, not by taxing them or their children, but by levying the taxes upon the excess fortunes to whittle them down, and on the excess incomes and excess inheritances, so that the people who reach the age of sixty can be retired from the active labor of life ... We also propose the care for the veterans, including the cash payment of the soldiers' bonus. We likewise propose that there should be an education for every youth in this land and that no youth would be dependent upon the financial means of his parents in order to have a college education.

In the following letter to Eleanor Roosevelt, a woman from Columbus, Indiana, protests that government-distributed relief robbed hardworking honest men to help “good-for-nothing loafers.”

Dec. 14, 1937

Mrs. Roosevelt: ... We have always had a shiftless, never-do-well class of people whose one and only aim in life is to live without work. I have been rubbing elbows with this class for nearly sixty years and have tried to help some of the most promising and have seen others try to help them, but it can't be done.

We cannot help those who will not try to help themselves and if they do try a square deal is all they need and by the way that is all this country needs or ever has needed: a square deal for all and then, let each one paddle their own canoe, or sink As for the old people on beggars' allowances: the taxpayers have provided homes for all the old people who never liked to work, where they will be neither cold nor hungry: much better homes than most of them have ever tried to provide for themselves.

They have lived many years through the most prosperous times of our country and had an opportunity to prepare for old age, but they spent their lives in idleness or worse and now they expect those who have worked like slaves, to provide a living for them and all their worthless descendants.... There is many a little child doing without butter on its bread, so that some old sot can have his booze and tobacco: some old sot who spent his working years loafing around pool rooms and saloons, boasting that the world owed him a living.... During the worst of the depression many of the farmers had to deny their families butter, eggs, meat, etc. and sell it to pay their taxes and then had to stand by and see the dead-beats [who qualified for relief] carry it home to their families by the arm load, and they knew their tax money was helping pay for it.... Is it any wonder the taxpayers are discouraged by all this penalizing of thrift and industry to reward shiftlessness, or that the whole country is on the brink of chaos?





22.13 Three Steps to Security

This 1936 poster deliberately emphasized the monthly check workers would receive during retirement, not the payroll deductions that would reduce their take-home pay to help finance immediate pensions for the elderly.

movement. For many working-class Americans, their final years had always been a steady decline into poverty. Unable to work due to age, illness, or the unwillingness of employers to hire them, most relied on family members or charities to survive. The plight of the aged assumed crisis proportions when Depression-era bank failures swept away much of their savings. Townsend clubs, formed to promote government pensions for the elderly, barraged Congress with petitions signed by ten million supporters, sending a clear message to the president and legislators in Washington, D.C.

Sensing an opportunity to enact other reforms long-championed by the left, Roosevelt attached

some controversial measures to the bill that provided pensions for the elderly. Unwilling to risk voting against the extremely popular pension proposal, conservative congressmen grudgingly voted for a law that also provided unemployment benefits, assistance to the disabled, and aid for dependent children.

FDR wanted to help the “deserving poor,” needy Americans legitimately entitled to public support, a category open to differing interpretations. What made someone deserving of aid in the new social security system? This poster (22.13) urging Americans to apply for their old-age benefits clearly noted that only industrial workers working for a salary or wage were eligible for the new pension program. The system did not cover agricultural and domestic workers until 1950, a concession to southern and agricultural business interests, who claimed they could not afford the mandatory employers’ contribution to their employees’ Social Security accounts (employers paid half). The Social Security Act of 1935 also set the following criteria for its other categories of aid: being laid off (not fired for cause) from an industrial job, being physically disabled or a widow (not an unwed mother) with children to raise.

The Social Security pension system operated along the same lines as private insurance by collecting premiums from individual subscribers in the form of payroll taxes. The public embraced Social Security as a system that simply returned these earlier deposits to retirees. Retired workers, however, began receiving checks in 1940, clearly too soon for them to have paid enough to cover the costs of their pension benefits. Ida May Fuller, a retired legal secretary, received the nation’s first Social Security check for \$22.54 after paying a total of \$24.75 in payroll taxes. She collected more than \$22,000 in Social Security checks before she died at age 100 in 1975.

Supporting Unions

Political pressures from the left and empathy for the poor had encouraged Roosevelt to create the Social Security system. These same forces influenced the president as he faced a different set of choices concerning the standoff between business and labor. His desire to curtail political challenges from the left and solidify his voter base by building a new coalition that included unions encouraged Roosevelt to choose the side of labor in this simmering industrial dispute. Business leaders’ open hostility to New Deal

Who was considered part of the “deserving poor” in the new Social Security system?

relief and public works programs also prompted FDR to ally himself with labor in 1935. When he proposed a heavy tax on the rich (again inspired by Long), the business elite denounced the wealthy president as “a traitor to his class.”

FDR openly mocked his opponents when running for reelection in 1936. “I should like to have it said of my first Administration that in it the forces of selfishness and of lust for power met their match. I should like to have it said of my second Administration that in it these forces met their master,” declared Roosevelt in his last campaign speech before defeating the Republican candidate, Kansas Governor Alf Landon. The general public’s antipathy to the rich was captured perfectly in this photo (22.14) by Dorothea Lange of a gas station in Kern County, California, which displayed a sign declaring “This is your country, don’t let the big men take it away from you” next to the free air pump.

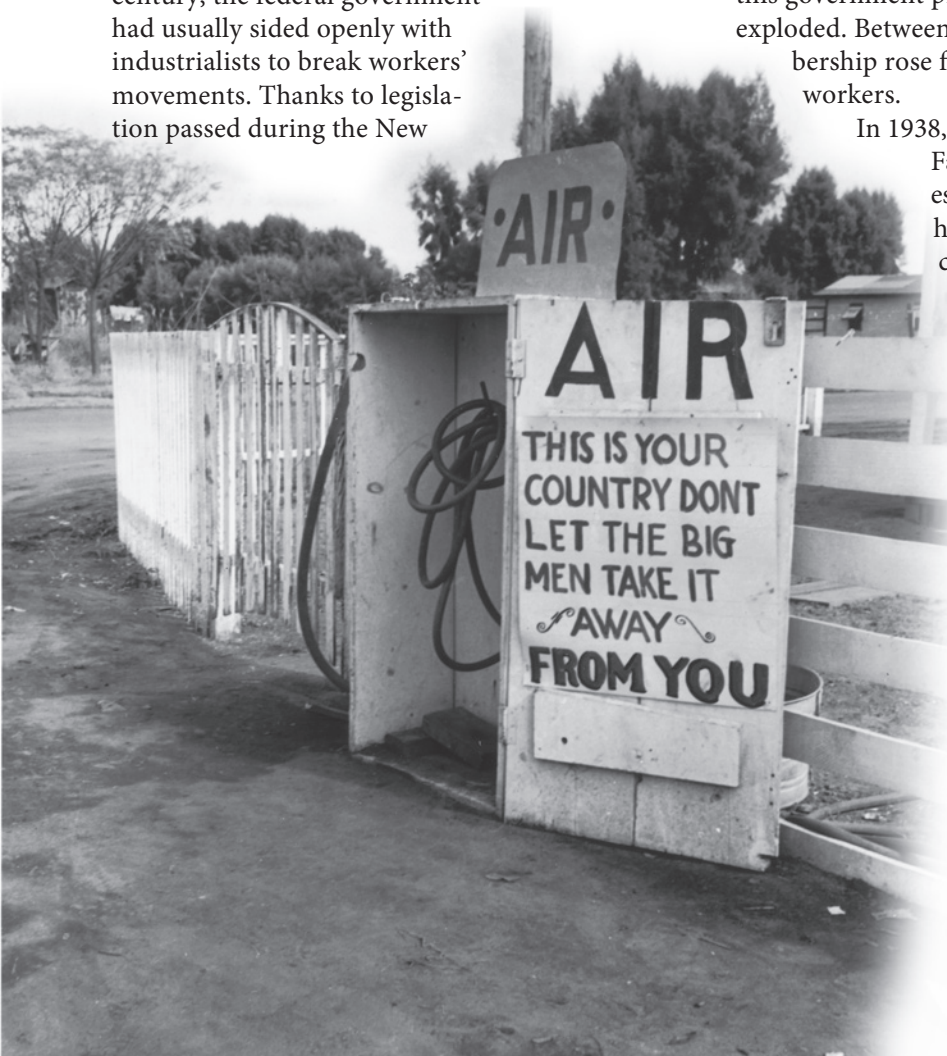
Roosevelt’s actions matched his rhetoric. Throughout the great strikes of the nineteenth century, the federal government had usually sided openly with industrialists to break workers’ movements. Thanks to legislation passed during the New

Deal, the federal government suddenly became labor’s friend. The National Industrial Recovery Act (1933), the same law that created the NRA, provided the first hint of things to come by declaring that workers had the right to organize and bargain collectively. Labor officials often referred to this section of the law, 7(a), as the “Magna Carta” of organized labor because it recognized a right that many industrialists still refused to acknowledge. (Issued in 1215, the real Magna Carta established the basic liberties of Englishmen.) When the Supreme Court declared the National Industrial Recovery Act unconstitutional, FDR signed the Wagner Act (1935), a law sponsored by Senator Robert Wagner (D-NY) to increase the purchasing power of workers by giving them the power to negotiate for higher wages. The Wagner Act created the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to supervise unions’ elections for their collective bargaining agents. The law prevented employers from firing or blacklisting workers who joined a union, or from infiltrating unions with spies. With this government protection, the union movement exploded. Between 1933 and 1941, union membership rose from 2.9 million to 8.7 million workers.

In 1938, FDR went even further with the Fair Labor Standards Act, which established a national minimum hourly wage (set initially at 25 cents, rising gradually to 40 cents), set maximum hours for the workweek (44 hours), and outlawed labor by children under 16 (with some exemptions, such as newspaper carriers). Aimed at industrial workers, the act excluded agricultural and domestic workers. FDR again demonstrated political savvy in maneuvering the bill through Congress. He attached the controversial wage and hours measures to a bill prohibiting child labor, knowing that few congressmen would vote against such a popular measure.

22.14 This Is Your Country

This sign reflected the general resentment toward the rich that encouraged Roosevelt to attack business and support unions in 1935.



How did government support of unions change during the 1930s?

The Resurgence of Labor

Government regulation gave crucial support to unions, but the task of building a successful labor movement lay with workers. Overcoming workers' fears that they would lose their jobs if they joined a union posed a significant hurdle for all organizers. When the United Auto Workers (UAW) took on Henry Ford, a strident opponent of unions, organizers passed out handbills assuring workers that "the Wagner Bill is behind you! Now get behind yourselves!" Ford had offered the best terms of employment with his \$5-a-day wages and eight-hour workdays in the 1910s and revolutionized American industry with his introduction of the assembly line (see Chapter 18). By the thirties, however, workers in unionized auto plants had much higher wages and guaranteed benefits.



Ford ruled his plants with an iron fist, and in 1937 when five labor organizers tried to pass out handbills to workers entering the Ford motor plant in Dearborn, Michigan, 40 members of the company's private security force attacked them. As seen in this photo (22.15), the guards unleashed a flurry of punches and kicks, throwing each man face first onto the pavement before tossing him down a set of stairs. One man's back was broken, and another recounted how two men held his legs apart while the security guards kicked him repeatedly in the groin.

A few news photographers managed to smuggle out photographs of the attacks, thwarting the attempt by Ford's security force to confiscate their film. The shocking images caused a public outcry. The NLRB ordered Ford to stop interfering with union organizing, but securing industry-wide recognition of the UAW required more dramatic action at Ford Motor Company and elsewhere. Ford's antiunion intimidation had worked in the past, but by the mid-1930s, many workers were ready to fight back. In 1934 alone, 1.5 million workers participated in 1,800 strikes.

Support from the government helped the labor movement grow, but so did a new vision of who could join a union. The **American Federation of Labor (AFL)** was a craft-based union that accepted only skilled workers, like carpenters or cigar makers, who practiced a trade. Excluding unskilled workers from the labor movement made little sense once assembly-line mass production began to dominate the manufacturing process. John L. Lewis, head of the United Mine Workers, argued that to become truly powerful unions needed to find room for unskilled workers, no matter their race or ethnicity. When the AFL expelled Lewis for trying to organize these groups, he formed the **Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO)**, a new type of labor union that organized workers within an entire industry rather than by their trade orientation.

Within two years of its founding, the CIO boasted 3.7 million members as compared to

22.15 Ford Security Guards Attack Labor Organizers

Ford's guards pull a labor organizer's jacket over his head to immobilize his arms as they pummel him. Signaling new support for the labor movement, the federal government intervened after this photo was published.

Why were the CIO's innovative organizing and strike tactics effective?

 **Read the Document** *Investigation of Strikebreaking (1939)*

the 3.4 million workers who belonged to the AFL. CIO organizers warned the diverse ranks of unskilled workers not to fall for their employers' old tricks. "The man working beside you, be he Negro, Jew or Pollock [Polish] is a working man like yourself ... You work together—FIGHT TOGETHER," one CIO labor organizer told steelworkers. "We were making a *religion* of racial unity," noted another CIO official. In sharp contrast to its enlightened racial views, the CIO joined with the AFL in urging women to voluntarily leave their jobs so men could have them. The CIO did, however, reverse the labor movement's indifference to electoral politics. Now that the government was actively supporting unions, keeping sympathetic officials in public office became a major CIO goal.

Recruiting members became easier when the CIO devised new methods of collective action that bore results. Automobile workers seized the spotlight when they pioneered a new and effective tactic: the sit-down strike. During a **sit-down strike** workers occupied a factory to paralyze production lines and prevent strikebreakers or management from entering the building. Because sit-down strikes caused the employer, as well as his striking employees, to lose money, this tactic brought employers to the negotiating table more quickly than traditional picket lines. Nearly 400,000 workers participated in sit-down strikes in 1937 alone, causing *Time* magazine to comment that "sitting down has replaced baseball as the national pastime."

When the UAW took over the main General Motors plant in Flint, Michigan, in 1937, the governor of Michigan and FDR (who had just received 84 percent of the votes cast by organized labor and 81 percent from low-income voters in the 1936 presidential election) refused to authorize the use of troops to retake the plant. By standing with the strikers, FDR solidified his support among the working class. Within six weeks General Motors capitulated and recognized the union. Ford finally recognized the UAW in 1941. Having lost the battle on the ground, the automobile companies fought back through the courts. In 1939, the Supreme Court ruled that sit-down strikes were illegal seizures of property.

The union movement's successes in the automobile, steel, and textile industries markedly improved the daily lives of workers, but even with these gains, workers had few material comforts compared to laborers today. By 1941, factory workers earned an average of \$1,449 a year, enough

for a married father with two children to buy two dresses for his wife every year, shoes for his children every other year, and a coat for himself every six years while living in a five-room apartment and driving a used car.

A New Deal for African Americans

As late as 1932, most black northern voters (few African Americans could vote in the South) remained loyal to the Republican Party and Herbert Hoover. Four years later Gallup polls estimated that 76 percent of northern blacks had voted for FDR. What had FDR done to deserve this newfound loyalty among black voters? Little, it seemed at first glance.

During his first administration, powerful Southern Democrats in Congress prevented FDR from proposing any civil rights legislation or guaranteeing equal treatment by New Deal agencies. Still, New Deal programs offered African Americans more federal and state aid than they had ever received before. Southern blacks usually received smaller relief payments than whites, but before 1933, most state agencies had given them nothing. In the 1936 presidential election, Democrats emphasized the benefits that the New Deal had brought to the African American community, proclaiming on billboards: "Do not bite the hand that feeds you." Eleanor Roosevelt's well-known interest in civil rights also helped draw black voters to FDR.

When black voters abandoned the Republicans for the Democratic Party, they joined the **New Deal coalition**, a political partnership formed in the mid-1930s among liberals, trade unionists, Catholics, and northern blacks that redrew the nation's political map. The strength of the New Deal coalition increased FDR's freedom to pursue his legislative agenda. In the newly elected 75th Congress, he did not need a single Southern or Republican vote to pass New Deal legislation.

As the black vote gained new importance to the Democratic Party, the administration became more responsive to African American demands. During FDR's second term, public works projects hired more black workers. FDR also appointed the first black federal judge and convened an unofficial Black Cabinet to investigate civil rights abuses and advise him on racial matters. Nonetheless, racial discrimination continued to plague the lives of African Americans in



22.16 “There’s No Way Like the American Way”

In 1937 this photo captured the irony of trumpeting America as the land of opportunity for whites, while needy black citizens stood in line at a soup kitchen.

the thirties. In Margaret Bourke-White’s 1937 photo (22.16), black residents wait for emergency relief during the Louisville, Kentucky flood, while above them, a billboard poster shows a carefree well-dressed white family driving a car. The image symbolically showcased the racial divide that remained intact throughout the decade. The fate of the Scottsboro Nine, nine black teenagers accused of rape by two young white women while riding on a freight train through Alabama in 1931, underscored the persistence of racial prejudice. The NAACP and the Communist Party took up their defense in well-publicized court cases, while the nine struggled to survive inmate violence, chain gangs, and guard abuse. The last of the Scottsboro Nine was not freed until 1950.

The Supreme Court Weighs In

In 1936, FDR won reelection with 61 percent of the popular vote, carrying every state except Maine and Vermont. By the late 1930s, Gallup public opinion polls offered another way besides elections to measure support for the president and his policies. *Envisioning Evidence: Interpreting Public Opinion Polls* indicates strong faith in FDR among the working class. The same could not be said of the Supreme Court. Of the nine justices, four consistently opposed New Deal

legislation, and two remained unpredictable. By 1937, the Court had declared two major pieces of early New Deal legislation, the NRA and AAA, unconstitutional. With lawsuits against the Wagner Act and Social Security Act on the Court’s docket, Roosevelt decided to act.

Suggesting that advanced age (rather than conservative ideology) was hampering the work of the Court, FDR proposed increasing the number of justices to a maximum of 15 by adding one new justice for every one over age 70 who had served more than ten years on the Court. With the conservative bloc all over age 70, Roosevelt’s plan would either increase the size of the court or force the older justices to retire. Either way he would have a chance to appoint judges who were sympathetic to the New Deal.

Dubbed the “Court-packing scheme” by detractors, the clash consumed a whole session of Congress and ended with a resounding defeat for FDR. He always maintained that though he lost the battle, he won the larger war with the Court. As Congress debated his proposal to add more justices, the Supreme Court surprised everyone by upholding the constitutionality of the Wagner Act and the Social Security Act. Over the next few years, death and retirement gave FDR the chance to appoint seven justices.

The fallout from the Court struggle had negative repercussions for the president, however. Although the Court began upholding New Deal legislation, the battle alienated progressive Republicans who had previously supported the president and pushed conservative Democrats into an alliance with like-minded Republicans. In 1938, Republicans narrowed the Democratic majority in Congress. The bipartisan conservative coalition was now strong enough to thwart new reform initiatives and begin cutting expenditures for New Deal recovery programs. The New Deal thus ground to a halt in 1938, after five years of public policy initiatives, experiments, and reforms. The federal government was now an active presence in the lives of millions, provoking a debate that continues into the twenty-first century over the proper role of the government in the economy and who is deserving of help.

What role did the Supreme Court play during the New Deal?

 Read the Document Mrs. Henry Weddington, Letter to President Roosevelt (1938)

Envisioning Evidence

INTERPRETING PUBLIC OPINION POLLS

Claiming to offer insight into the mindset of the common man, George Gallup’s American Institute of Public Opinion began publishing its well-received public opinion polls in 1935. Previous polls had based their accuracy on collecting as many responses as possible. Relying on new statistical sampling theories, Gallup instead interviewed small (3,000–4,000) demographically representative groups in person and through mail questionnaires. Gallup viewed popular opinion polls as a way for “the plain people of the United States” to communicate directly to their elected representatives, but Gallup played a critical role in that conversation. The wording of questions affected responses and Gallup freely interpreted the meaning of his surveys through regular newspaper columns. “What are the main cleavages that exist today in American public opinion?” he asked. According to Gallup polls, “the split between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots.’”

Relief and Roosevelt, August 24, 1938
Both questions asked together of all income levels, except farm owners.

1. If you (or your husband) lost your (or his) job and couldn't find other work, about how long could you hold out before you had to apply for relief?

Duration	Percentage
Persons already on relief	~15%
One month or less	~30%
Two to six months	~20%
Six months to two years	~15%
Three years or more, or indefinitely, or would never go on relief	~15%

2. Are you for or against Roosevelt today?

Duration	For (%)	Against (%)
Persons already on relief	~80	~20
One month or less	~65	~35
Two to six months	~50	~50
Six months to two years	~45	~55
Three years or more	~30	~70

Gallup Interprets His Data

“In view of the relatively high feeling of insecurity among large sections of the population it is not difficult to understand the popularity of old age pensions and other provisions of the Social Security Act.”

“It seems clear from this evidence that political attitudes today are determined not so much by theories of government [strong federal government, states rights, communism] as by bread-and-butter economics, that support from the financially insecure continues to be the backbone of New Deal strength.”

Source: The New York Times, August 24, 1938, p. 10.

Married Women Working, December 25, 1938

Do you approve of a married woman earning money in business or industry if she has a husband capable of supporting her?

Response	Percentage
YES	~20%
NO	~80%

Gender	YES (%)	NO (%)
Men voters	~20	~80
Women voters	~25	~75

Respondents Explain Their Answer

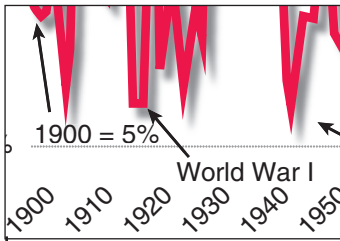
“There aren’t enough jobs for married men”

“Married women who work when they don’t have to are just taking bread out of the mouths of others.”

“Any one who wants to work should be able to work.”

“The problem is to create more jobs for all.”

Source: The New York Times, December 25, 1938, p. 23.



1928

Herbert Hoover elected president
Predicts permanent prosperity



1929

Stock market crashes
Signals beginning of Depression



1932

Reconstruction Finance Corporation established
Hoover's effort to help businesses and banks with federal loans

Bonus March
Public outrage over army's eviction of protesting veterans from Washington, D.C.



1933

FDR inaugurated president
Restores faith and confidence in government and capitalism

New Deal begun
Five year creation of federal agencies, laws, and reforms that restructure American capitalism and provide economic security to citizens

CHAPTER REVIEW

Review Questions

1. What groups of people did the New Deal help and why?
2. Why did images of breadlines and migrant farmers become enduring symbols of Depression-era suffering?
3. Why were there labor protests in the thirties, a time when one might expect workers simply to be grateful for any job on any terms?
4. What conflicting visions prompted the right and left to criticize the New Deal?
5. What new roles did the New Deal establish for the federal government in American society?

Key Terms

Stock market crash of 1929 A ten-day period beginning on October 20, 1929, when the value of stocks plummeted as panicked investors sold off their stock in droves. This moment is usually considered the official start of the Depression. **657**

Bonus March A two-month-long demonstration by forty thousand impoverished World War I veterans in Washington, D.C., that ended violently when the army expelled the protesters. **660**

New Deal An avalanche of legislation from 1933 to 1938 intended to promote economic recovery, reform American capitalism, and offer security to ordinary Americans. **662**

Dust Bowl Drought and soil erosion caused massive dust storms across southern and plains states throughout the thirties. **670**

“Migrant Mother” Dorothea Lange’s 1936 photograph of a destitute woman, which became an iconic portrait of Depression-era suffering. **673**

Share our wealth Louisiana Senator Huey Long’s plan to redistribute money from the rich to the poor. **674**

American Federation of Labor (AFL) A craft-based organization that accepted only skilled workers, like carpenters or cigar makers, who practiced a trade. **678**

Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) A brand-new type of labor organization that organized workers within an entire industry rather than by their trade orientation. **678**

Sit-down strike Workers occupy a factory to paralyze production lines and prevent strikebreakers or management from entering the building. **679**

New Deal coalition A political partnership formed in the mid-thirties among liberals, trade unionists, Catholics, and northern blacks that redrew the nation’s political map. **679**



1935

Works Progress Administration
Public works program employs one-fifth of the workforce from 1935 to 1943

Wagner Act
Offers government protection to unions



1935

Share Our Wealth Movement
Senator Huey Long's proposal to redistribute wealth pushes FDR to the left

CIO founded
Organizes workers by industry rather than by trade



1936

Dust Bowl crisis worsens
Drought, soil erosion result in major ecological disaster

FDR wins reelection
New Deal coalition forms



1937

FDR tries to reform Supreme Court
Proposal's failure exposes limits of FDR's power

Social Security payroll taxes begin
Establishes funding mechanism for federal pensions

MyHistoryLab Connections

Visit www.myhistorylab.com for a customized Study Plan that will help you build your knowledge of *A New Deal for America*.

Questions for Analysis

1. Why would the sentiments expressed in this political cartoon lead to dissatisfaction with Hoover?

 **View the Image** John Baer, "We Demand a New Deal!" (1931), p. 662


2. How did FDR reassure the public about his plan for alleviating their financial hardships?

 **Read the Document** Franklin D. Roosevelt — Radio Address (1933), p. 666

3. What values did post office murals celebrate?

 **View the Closer Look** *Images as History: Post Office Murals*, p. 669

4. Why did interpretations of "Migrant Mother" differ?

 **Watch the Video** Video Lecture: Dorothea Lange and *Migrant Mother*, p. 672

5. How did employers try to break strikes in the 1930s?

 **Read the Document** *Investigation of Strikebreaking* (1939), p. 678

Other Resources from This Chapter

 **Hear the Audio File** *FDR's First Inaugural Address*, p. 663

 **Read the Document**

- Father Charles E. Coughlin, "A Third Party" (1936), p. 667
- Carey McWilliams, *Okies in California* (1939), p. 671
- Mrs. Henry Weddington, *Letter to President Roosevelt* (1938), p. 680

 **View the Closer Look**

- *Images as History: "Migrant Mother"— An American Icon*, p. 673
- *Competing Visions: Sharing the Wealth*, p. 675
- *Envisioning Evidence: Interpreting Public Opinion Polls*, p. 681

 **View the Image**

- *Children with "Hoover's Poor Farm" Sign*, p. 660
- *CCC worker* (1938), p. 668

 **View the Map** *Interactive Map: The Great Depression*, p. 670

 **Watch the Video**

- *Prosperity of the 1920s and the Great Depression*, p. 656
- Video Lecture: *Responding to the Great Depression, Whose New Deal?*, p. 679