

# Chapter 25

## The Great Depression and the New Deal, 1929—1939

### Chapter Summary

Chapter 25 provides the student with an overview of the Great Depression and Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal program. Topics covered include the conditions creating the 1929 stock market crash, the impact of the depression on the lives of Americans, Hoover's problems with confronting the economic crisis, the policies and programs of the New Deal, the impact of the New Deal on the lives of Americans, and the political stalemate reached by the end of the second Roosevelt administration.

- I. Hard Times in Hooverville
  - A. Crash!
  - B. The Depression Spreads
  - C. "Women's Jobs" and "Men's Jobs"
  - D. Families in the Depression
  - E. "Last Hired, First Fired"
  - F. Protest
  
- II. Herbert Hoover and the Depression
  - A. The Limits of Voluntarism
  - B. Repudiating Hoover: The Election of 1932
  
- III. Launching the New Deal
  - A. Action Now!
  - B. Creating Jobs
  - C. Helping Some Farmers
  - D. The Flight of the Blue Eagle
  - E. Critics Right and Left
  
- IV. Consolidating the New Deal
  - A. Weeding Out and Lifting Up
    1. Social security
    2. Money, tax, and land reform
  - B. Expanding Relief
  - C. The Roosevelt Coalition and the Election of 1936
  
- V. The New Deal and American Life
  - A. Labor on the March
  - B. Women and the New Deal
  - C. Minorities and the New Deal
  - D. The New Deal: North, South, East, and West
  - E. The New Deal and Public Activism

- VI. Ebbing of the New Deal
  - A. Challenging the Court
  - B. More Hard Times
  - C. Political Stalemate
  
- VII. Good Neighbors and Hostile Forces
  - A. Neutrality and Fascism
  - B. Edging Toward Involvement
  
- VIII. Conclusion

## Learning Objectives

After a careful examination of Chapter 25, students should be able to do the following:

1. Briefly outline the causes of the Great Depression.
2. Describe the immediate economic impact of the Great Depression on the lives of average Americans.
3. Explain the unique impact of the Great Depression on the availability of jobs for women. Describe the impact of the Great Depression on the lives of children. Describe the impact of the Great Depression on the lives of African Americans and Hispanic Americans.
4. Identify the major groups in the United States that openly protested against the conditions created by the depression.
5. Define the term *voluntarism* and describe its significance in the Hoover administration's approach to easing the nation's suffering during the depression.
6. Identify the Bonus Army and describe its treatment at the hands of the Hoover administration.
7. Briefly describe Franklin D. Roosevelt's political background and why voters found him such an appealing candidate in the election of 1932.
8. List the major pieces of legislation passed during the First Hundred Days.
9. Explain the shortcomings of the Agricultural Adjustment Act and the National Industrial Recovery Act. Describe the Supreme Court's reaction to these laws.
10. Identify the American Liberty League and describe its role in articulating the business world's response to the New Deal.
11. Identify the sources of leftist criticism of the New Deal. Name four 1930s personalities who publicly criticized the New Deal for being too conservative.
12. List the major pieces of legislation associated with the Second New Deal. Explain how relief programs established during the Second New Deal differed from those created during the First Hundred Days.

13. Describe the realignment of the Democratic Party during the 1930s.
14. Describe the impact of the New Deal on labor organization in the United States.
15. Describe the political and economic impact of the New Deal on women.
16. Describe the economic and political impact of the New Deal on American minorities including African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanic Americans. Describe the impact of the New Deal on the American South and West.
17. Explain Roosevelt's court packing scheme.
18. Describe the status and effectiveness of the New Deal by 1938.
19. Explain the Good Neighbor policy and how it was connected to the rise of fascism in Europe.
20. List the positive and negative outcomes of the New Deal in terms of its impact on American politics.

## **Topics for Classroom Lecture**

1. Discuss the phenomenon of the Dixie demagogues, the cadre of Southern politicians who emerged during the 1930s. What kind of political style typified the Dixie demagogue? Comment on the special appeal the Dixie demagogues held for southerners of the 1930s. Was Huey Long a typical Dixie demagogue? If he was, why? If not, how did he distinguish himself from the others?
2. Discuss the unique role of Eleanor Roosevelt during the New Deal era. How did Eleanor Roosevelt differ from the first ladies who preceded her? How did she impact the role of the first lady? How did she and FDR compliment each other politically? To what extent did she contribute to defining the legacy of the era?
3. Present an examination of Franklin Roosevelt as a politician. Most historians agree the New Deal did little to significantly reduce the suffering associated with the Great Depression, yet Roosevelt was re-elected in 1936 and again in 1940. Why? What were Roosevelt's strengths as a politician? Did he have greater leeway and freedom in his role as President because of the times? How did the press treat Roosevelt? Would this be the case today?

## **Topics for Class Discussion and Essays**

1. The New Deal is often considered a defining era for the modern Democratic Party. There is no doubt that the Republican and Democratic parties of the 1930s were markedly different from those at the turn of the century. Have students compare and contrast the parties of the 1930s with the parties of the 1890s. Address such issues as membership, attitude toward the strength of the federal and state governments, financial and business agenda, and the degree of support for social reform.
2. Have students assess the impact of the New Deal on the American South. Consider the following questions:
  - a. FDR referred to the American South in 1933 as the nation's number one economic problem. Why? Was the South harder hit by the depression than other regions of the country, or was Roosevelt referring to deeper economic problems in the South? How long had these economic problems plagued the South?

- b. Which New Deal programs impacted the South the most?
  - c. How did the New Deal impact the traditional relationship between the southern states and the federal government?
  - d. How did the New Deal impact race relations in the South? What effect did changing race relations have on Southern politics?
  - e. Was the New Deal the gateway to the Second Reconstruction? Why?
3. Compare and contrast the New Deal era with other reform movements of the modern period such as the Populist and Progressive movements. What characteristics of these two earlier reform movements were inherited by the New Dealers? Also, does the New Deal predict future reform in the 1960s? What elements of 1960s reform have their roots in the New Deal era?

## Topics for Class Projects and Term Papers

1. Have students examine the photographic legacy of the New Deal. Resources for such a project include the work of Margaret Bourke-White, Dorothea Lange, and James Agee. In assessing this work, have students consider the following:
- a. Is one region of the country the particular focus of most of this work? Why?
  - b. What does this photography tell us about southern life in the 1930s?
  - c. Was it important and/or necessary for the government to finance this work? What is its value?
  - d. What does this work tell us about the South and its connection to the rest of the nation between 1877 and 1940?
2. Examine the role of technology in depression-era politics. Look at the use of radio by Roosevelt as well as his enemies. How much impact did radio have in defining political allegiances in the 1930s? What did this predict for the future?
3. Have students examine the individuals who composed Roosevelt's Brain Trust. Who were Roosevelt's closest advisors? What were their educational backgrounds? What suited them for the job of creating the New Deal? Most importantly, what was the political background of these advisors? To what extent had they been exposed to socialism and radical political philosophy?

## Resources for Lectures and Research Projects

- Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin and the Great Depression* (1982).  
 Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt* (1998—1999).  
 Frank Freidel, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Rendezvous with Destiny* (1990).  
 Gerald Gamm, *The Making of New Deal Democrats* (1989).  
 David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929—1945* (1999).  
 William E. Leuchtenberg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal* (1963).  
 James T. Patterson, *Congressional Conservatism and the New Deal* (1967).  
 Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks* (1978).  
 George B. Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913—1945* (1967).  
 Nancy J. Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR* (1983).

## Audio-Visual Resources

*American Photography: A Century of Images*, KTCA Twin Cities Public Television/ Middlemarch Films, Inc., 1999, 180 minutes.

This three-part series examines the history of American photography. There are three episodes, one dealing with the period 1900–1934, the second focusing on 1934–1959, and the final episode looking at 1960–1999.

*Eleanor Roosevelt: The American Experience*, Ambrica Productions, Inc., 1999, 150 minutes.

This two-part series offers a new look at one of America's most intriguing first ladies.

*The Great Depression*, Blackside, Inc., 1993, 420 minutes.

This seven-part series examines the causes and conditions of the Great Depression.

*Great Depression*, A&E Video, 200 minutes.

This A&E production, narrated by Mario Cuomo, examines the American economic crisis from 1929–1941.

*Huey Long*, Ken Burns/Richard Kilberg, 1985, 90 minutes.

An early biographical piece produced by Ken Burns and narrated by David McCullough.

*Scottsboro: An American Tragedy*, *The American Experience*, PBS Video, 90 minutes.

This video tells the story of the most significant racial legal challenge of the 1930s.

*Tennessee Valley Authority*, A&E Video.

This look at the Tennessee Valley Authority includes rare photographs, contemporary film, and first-hand accounts from those who were involved in the project.