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History of American People Since 1877

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Midterm Essay

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Melissa Crider – U.S. History – Midterm – Essay – Question #6:

***Discuss Roosevelt's efforts to end the Great Depression. Describe some of the agencies created under the New Deal program and their impact. How did Roosevelt's efforts to combat the Depression differ from Hoover's before him? Analyze Roosevelt's view of government, particularly what he believed were its responsibilities to the people.***

Shortcuts are typically unwise and met with understandable skepticism of all kinds. It is well known that there be no such thing as a magic bullet, *but...* If an individual could create, hold, and encircle a magic wand over our dear country's ails today, sprinkling hopeful gold dust that fell down encoded with possible solutions that brought real hope to all of us, would we Americans reach our arms and hands and smiles upward, letting it fall on as much of us and our neighbors in support of such?

Franklin D. Roosevelt was a philanthropic maverick who also played the part of the nation's young 50 states' parent during his period of office as President of the United States; he braved doing this very thing. An incredibly mindful and practical magician however, it may have seemed that cards just magically fell out of his buttoned sleeves, but in reality, Roosevelt, or *FDR* [henceforth] as he preferred to be called, worked on each new "magic trick" under the auspices of having the master plan of economic equality all the while after having consulted with the advisements of many exceptional minds in several diverse fields before the fact.

Our country was in dire straits. Like a good parent to 50 children who were falling apart, FDR held "the conviction that the national government had a responsibility to ensure the material well being of ordinary Americans (Foner, 877)." This stark contrast to Hoover's presidency must have been shocking at first in the first famous *Hundred Days* that he took office. His bravery and personal integrity was so very crucial at such a time of rock bottom morale for most

Americans who could not escape the unfortunate poverty cycle of the Depression. A bit of magical golden dust falling out of the governmental sky was hopeful medicine for the unconnected patches of scores of problems that plagued the nation in the 1930s. Though not all of his ideas were original ones, FDR had the volition to roll up his sleeves and land them into immediate practice.

Thinking minds tend to hire other thinking minds to insulate where their abilities may not be strongest and Roosevelt did just that. “He reclaimed the word freedom from conservatives (Foner, 879)” by defining it as, “greater security for the average man (Foner, 879) versus advocating only the well being of “the privileged few (Foner, 879).” FDR was wise or ingenious enough to, “...rely heavily for advice on a group of intellectuals and social workers who took up key positions in his administration [...] his advisors did not speak with one voice (Foner, 863).” FDR consulted intellectuals from all sorts of walks— *The Brains Trust* (Foner, 863) group of the Columbia University professors who helped in planting the mental seeds of the groundwork for the first New Deal.

FDR and Herbert Hoover were downright foils of each other; in their broad mentalities they believed in and stood for very different things—like how they believed the Depression should be dealt with. Hoover responded to the Depression by wanting to make a way for people to go back to work in lieu of giving them governmental economic relief whereas FDR did it differently. Not only did he want them to go back to work, he made millions of governmental jobs that helped millions of Americans who were living hand-to-mouth and he provided much relief in the way of setting into action his programs. Hoover cared about people having a *home* first. It seems the logical first step in the sad matrix. How can people go to work if they have no home? FDR deemed it an American right to create a way for every American to be able to own a

home.

One of the starkest differences is summed up by Hoover having said, “liked to say that the difference between dictatorship and democracy was simple: dictators organize from the top down, democracies from the bottom up (Herbert).” This is exactly opposite to how FDR conducted himself in his democratic modern liberalism way of going about his New Deal and engaging our government in every affair one can think of from banks to farms to jobs to entering the housing market, creating the FCC to be watchdog of the radio waves, and so much more. He created and executed a to-do list from mere shambles that could only have been dreamed up and *Fed-Ex'ed* via a blinking red-nosed sleigh by Santa's helpers from the rosy-cheeked kinder North Pole.

The men's definitions of “freedom” differed in this way. FDR rooted for the underdog's rising up to have a chance at equality where Hoover, while perhaps well intentioned, seemed to be more of a social Darwinist. Hoover's laissez-faire/live-and-let-live mentality when it came to money was such that he supported leaving private big business as free of government control or participation as possible and he thought American values to be upheld best when the government remained eerily detached from citizen's affairs—even during the great Depression?! The fact that the Depression began in 1929 following the stock market crash shortly after he was made president in 1928 could not have reflected well upon the ultimate effectiveness of his presidency on the Depression. His methods or attempts to ameliorate the economic travesties of the time were known to have not succeeded.

Hoover was a conservative republican where FDR was known for giving “the term liberalism its modern meaning (Foner, 879).” Regarding this modern liberalism and how he was

a man who surely walked his talk, FDR married a very atypical cool woman, Eleanor, who entertained and shared thoughts of her own. It is especially telling, validating of FDR's good character that in he and Eleanor's very own relationship, a democratic and liberal freedom of allowing room for differences in possessing one's own thoughts and accepting them thrived. He seemed to have not been duplicitous as a man or president. Most did not even know that this charismatic president was confined to a wheelchair since popular radio precluded the need to see him. FDR's late 1930s radio broadcasted "Fireside Chats" were his wise way to reach America right in their living rooms since radio was in most homes at the time and because his competitors had their hands deep into the journalistic fields, with monopolies on newspapers/print media.

The first New Deal was about financial recovery and the second New Deal was about securing such. I do believe that the Roosevelt administration would have been competent enough to build a brand new country on the moon if the 1930s had allowed it. They put so many programs into action to help all Americans. The REA: Rural Electrification Administration that helped to get most of America's farms supplied with electricity by 1950 has been one of the most successful [and meaningful] over the long haul.

FDR's first few months in office, *The Hundred Days*, saw a flurry of urgent activity that dove in and swam without looking back to begin to clean up the end of Hoover's term at once, beginning with the national "bank holiday" that precipitated The Emergency Banking Act. Of many wonderful programs that were put into effect, some of these have stood the test of time: The FDIC, Social Security Act of 1935, AAA, REA, WPA and its Federal Theatre Project, CCC, CWA, PWA, NRA, FCC, CIO, the Glass-Steagall Act that kept big boy banks from being able to buy big boy stock—which was repealed in the 1990s—a frightening omen now shy at surviving in present day America on *Big Corporate America's* cracked eggshells.

In disagreement with Foner, *The Hundred Days* ultimately failed absolutely no one in the long run; one must have the means to build rural family homes for people to live in before the same men are able to build thriving city skyscrapers. The fact that by 1942, the Civilian Conservation Corps, CCC, had passed more than 3 million Americans who had a chance to make thirty bucks a month by working together on what today we would be most popular in terming “green” efforts—forests, flood control, parks and wildlife, is stunning. The morale that was being built in those men who marched together in Yosemite National Park in 1935 with their long handsaws was no little feat. The Public Works Administration, PWA, efforts resound in ways that still affect us today. The fact that The Triborough Bridge, Key West Highway, and Grand Coulee Dam were built with their appropriation of 3+ billion dollars and now stand to represent Americans coming together in a time of desperation to just make a living, is beyond amazing. Directed by Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, they built so many infrastructures, schools, hospitals, roads, etc., that respect and a bit of reverence is surely due.

On November 11, 1935, The New York Times released an attack that was released by the Associated Press the day before regarding FDR’s leadership. Of the New Deal, they castigated the president calling his laws, “usurpations of authority (New York Times Company)” and stating further, “...Autocratic power to plan the course of economic affairs has become centered in the President of the United States (New York Times Company).” They compared him to the likes of King George III of England, Italian Mussolini, and German Hitler representing FDR as an unfair sly dictator.

The word “freedom” has proven to be too large of an umbrella in that it allows room for too much “freedom” by way of costly definitions. Such is the word, “love” for instance; its vastness is too roomy in possible connotations and varied mistakable meanings that can crush or

heal. Touching on the subject of “love,” when you have 50 states [children] that are having an incredibly rough go at being awkward erring teen-agers [in the grand time span of America’s birth, teen-aged years may be nearing spot-on] and your kids have ended up impoverished and unruly, then only a good president [parent] elects to go to the travail of firmly stepping in and up to do something about it. The ones who admonished FDR at such time seem similar to people undergoing puberty who even after having run away from home and spent all of their money, still bark belligerently at their parent[s] while unreasonably ranting that they can live in the streets with their friends in a gutter despite their parent[s] trying their very best to take over and find ways to help.

No matter the attacks on his character by the politically correct American Liberty League or others influential or not, FDR was an exceptional man and an absolute blessing to the skeletal framework, the utter foundation of our country in its truest time of critical need. A parent’s care and discipline... is a role that FDR had all but no other option to rush into playing in order to attempt to rescue the people, the children, the teen-agers of this nation while being the President of the United States.

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