

To what extent did Franklin Delano Roosevelt's actions during the Great Depression benefit the United States?

History

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## Abstract

The Great Depression greatly affected the United States. During this time in history, many financial institutions closed down as the stock market crashed, and more Americans became unemployed. As more people lost their jobs, it became increasingly difficult for families to pay bills and have food. This eventually led to families being homeless and children starving. A little after the Great Depression began, Franklin Delano Roosevelt became president of the United States. There are different perspectives on his actions while in office. Some historians believe he was effective, while others have arguments against his actions. In order to evaluate historians' claims, this essay will explore the question, **To what extent did Franklin Delano Roosevelt's actions during the Great Depression benefit the United States?**

To answer the question, the different forms of the New Deal made, as well as the many acts that's were passed. This essay in particular will be focusing on banking, agriculture, unemployment, housing, aviation, the economy, and business. Data will also be used to support historians' arguments. This will be shown with the use of statistics throughout the essay. This essay will be covering the 1920's, and 1930's, since that was the time of the Great Depression.

After a detailed evaluation of historians' viewpoints towards Roosevelt's actions, it can be concluded that although not drastically, Roosevelt's actions were effective in helping the United States get out of the Great Depression. Roosevelt was able to lower the falling unemployment rate, by creating more job opportunities, stop growing bank closers by putting the trust back into banks, and help the overall economy. Despite this, a limitation to this essay is that a further investigation could be looked at the extent WWII played in ending the Great Depression.

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## Introduction

The United States faced many economic, political, and social problems in the late 1920s. After the Great War ended in 1918, Americans heaved a sigh of relief and were very excited about their nation's future. Eleanor Roosevelt later said, "The feeling of relief and thankfulness... was beyond description."<sup>1</sup>

The stock market crash of October 1929 shocked the public, as investors' shares fell 40 percent, over 5,000 financial institutions closed down, and 25 percent of the American people were unemployed.<sup>2</sup> Because of the hardships, Americans began to lose faith in the dying capitalism, thinking that the system has failed its citizens. Franklin Delano Roosevelt replaced President Hoover with an optimistic plan that appealed to fearful Americans.

Many historians would agree that Roosevelt had to deal with many complications during his presidency from 1933-1945. However, historians debate over the effectiveness of his actions during his time in office. One of the biggest challenges Roosevelt faced during his presidency was the Great Depression in the United States that lasted a decade, from 1929-1939. Responding to the crisis, he implemented different forms of the New Deal, passed during different times, to help solve unemployment in the United States and give the American people more hope after the stock market crashed in 1929.

Many New Left Historians, feel that the New Deal was successful in that it controlled the stock market, provided aid for farmers, acknowledged labor unions, and created a minimum wage and social security.<sup>3</sup> Historian David Kennedy writes the New Deal was successful saying,

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<sup>1</sup> David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman and Edward J. Blum, *Major Problems in American History*, 214.

<sup>3</sup> Robert F. Himmelberg, *The Great Depression and the New Deal* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 19.

“Into the five years of the New Deal was crowded more social and institutional change than into virtually any comparable compass of time in the nation’s past.”<sup>4</sup> However, despite this change, many conservative historians argue that the New Deal did not achieve the goals it intended to create. Especially with the second New Deal, people argued against his plan saying it was against the constitution and involved dictatorship.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, historians such as Barton Bernstein, wrote, “The New Deal failed to solve the problem of depression... raise the impoverished... redistribute income...extend equality and generally counterenaised [sic] racial discrimination and segregation... make business more responsible to the social welfare or threaten business pre- eminent political power.”<sup>6</sup> This essay will explore the reasons for the diverse opinions responding to the New Deal, asking, **To what extent did Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s actions during the Great Depression benefit the United States?**

### The First New Deal

During the first hundred days of his presidency, Roosevelt created the plan of the first New Deal. In his plan, Roosevelt addressed weakened areas in the economy that were banking, agriculture, and the unemployment. The goal of the New Deal was to influence change and save capitalism and democracy in the United States by putting emphasis on relief, recovery and reform.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*, 363.

<sup>5</sup> Robert F. Himmelberg, *The Great Depression and the New Deal* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 18.

<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman and Edward J. Blum, *Major Problems in American History*, 237.

<sup>7</sup> Nick Fellows and Mike Wells, *The Great Depression and the Americas 1929-39* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 63.

After 1929, when the stock market crashed, banks closed at a rate of forty per day.<sup>8</sup> In 1929, 642 banks closed. This number progressively increased. In 1930, there were 1,345 bank closures and in 1931, 2,298 banks shut down.<sup>9</sup> This was before federal deposit insurance. Without this insurance, if a bank closed down, money deposited in the bank would disappear.<sup>10</sup> With the stock market crash, the public began to lose trust depositing their money in banks, fearful they would lose their life savings. To counteract this problem, Roosevelt set up the Emergency Banking Relief Act, passed on March 9, 1933.<sup>11</sup> After it passed, banks closed for four days; during this time, their finances were examined. If their finances were too bad and could not be saved, they were immediately shut down, whereas if a bank's finances had hope, it was given a grant by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation [RFC] and reopened.<sup>12</sup> On March 15, about half of the banks that were shut down reopened, and people appeared to regain faith in the banking system.

This Act received varied opinions from the public. President Hoover's supporters argued that this act could have passed before Roosevelt's inauguration, but he waited so that he could get credit for the reform, while others argued for even more government control.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the criticisms, one billion dollars had been restored back into the banks from the American public after the act passed. The act also paved the way for Glass- Steagall Banking Act to be passed in June of 1933. This was to reassure people would get back their savings if a bank

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>9</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, Russell D. Buhite, and David W. Levy, *FDR's Fireside Chats* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 11.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Nick Fellows and Mike Wells, *The Great Depression and the Americas 1929-39* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 65.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 66.

were to shut down.<sup>14</sup> Many historians argue that the act was successful because after 1933, banks closed at an average of 10 per year,<sup>15</sup> a substantial decrease than before the act was passed. Historian Robert McElvaine agreed writing that “The Emergency Banking Act and the Glass-Steagall Act, despite the bankers’ complaints about deposit insurance, greatly strengthened the nation’s private banking system.”<sup>16</sup> The increased trust made for more deposits in the banks, which helped banks stay open.

During WWI, farmers had to use more farmland to feed the Allied troops that were fighting. In 1932, a drought dried up the land and the wind blew away what was left of the exposed soil. Especially in the Dust Bowl states, prices dropped as the Depression worsened; many farmers and their families starved.<sup>17</sup> Roosevelt looked into agriculture as one of his reforms because it made up thirty percent of the nation’s workforce.<sup>18</sup> Roosevelt thought that if farmers had more money, they could repay debts and not foreclose. They would also be able to spend it in local businesses, which would help the overall economy.<sup>19</sup> To help the problems of low prices and overproduction, Roosevelt implemented three acts dealing with the agricultural industry. The Farm Credit Act took multiple organizations that dealt with agriculture and combined them, making them into one organization.<sup>20</sup> The Emergency Farm Mortgage Act made

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<sup>14</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, Russell D. Buhite, and David W. Levy, *FDR's Fireside Chats* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 11.

<sup>15</sup> David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*, 366.

<sup>16</sup> Robert S. McElvaine, *The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941* (New York: Times Books, 1993), 168.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman and Edward J. Blum, *Major Problems in American History*, 214.

<sup>18</sup> Nick Fellows and Mike Wells, *The Great Depression and the Americas 1929-39* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 66.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

loans available to farmers who were in danger of their land being taken away.<sup>21</sup> Because overproduction was making the prices low, the Agricultural Adjustment Act [AAA] would pay farmers not to produce any food to push prices back up to what it was before WWI. The money came from an increase in taxes on food processing companies and consumer foods.<sup>22</sup>

Many historians agree that Roosevelt's Agriculture acts were successful because they resulted in the loss of 76 million acres of farmland, which made farm income rise from 4.5 billion in 1932 to 6.9 billion by 1935.<sup>23</sup> With less land, farmers didn't need to overproduce food. Historian Anthony Badger wrote that even though "...farm income was only 80 percent parity and farm income only reached 1929 levels twice before 1940...the AAA enabled farmers to survive...[and] farm recovery programmes also provided the policy tools with which farmers could be guaranteed security in the future."<sup>24</sup>

However, even though it raised farmers' incomes, historians argue the act made unemployment worse because the loans given to farmers were used to buy more efficient machinery, requiring fewer workers.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, even though some historians feel that erasing farmland proved statistically to help increase farmers' income, other historians like Jim Powell argue that the AAA was not beneficial because it "...led to the destruction of millions of acres of crops and millions of farm animals, while many Americans were hungry...High farm

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 67

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Anthony J. Badger, *The New Deal: The Depression Years, 1933-40* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1989), 168.

<sup>25</sup> Nick Fellows and Mike Wells, *The Great Depression and the Americas 1929-39* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 67.



foreclosure rates persisted during the New Deal, indicating that it did almost nothing for the poorest farmers.”<sup>26</sup>

To solve the increasing rate of unemployment in the United States, Roosevelt implemented various acts that helped create jobs for men that were not in the workforce. The Civilian Conservation Corps [CCC] was established for young men between 18-25 years of age who could not find work.<sup>27</sup> The workers spent a maximum of six months working on environmental projects such as putting out forest fires or controlling mosquitos. The workers were given a minimum of about thirty dollars of month.<sup>28</sup> While this act did create jobs for many, the duration was only for six months, causing many of the former workers to be unemployed after their time was up.

Unemployment brought poverty stricken Americans, who were once healthy and well fed. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration [FERA] was created in May of 1933.<sup>29</sup> This act provided short- term relief money to the unemployed. Half of the 500 million dollars FERA provided was used for relief of the unemployed and divided up between states. Each state had to have a FERA office and create relief programs. In order to create these programs, states were given choices of either increasing or borrowing taxes.<sup>30</sup> However, some historians view this relief program as ineffective because many states were solely concerned with their economy and did not want to deal with spending money on relief programs for poverty-stricken Americans. Therefore, because of the lack of money, FERA was only able to pay 25 dollars a month to

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<sup>26</sup> Jim Powell, *FDR's Folly: How Roosevelt and His New Deal Prolonged the Great Depression* (New York: Crown Forum, 2003), vi.

<sup>27</sup> Nick Fellows and Mike Wells, *The Great Depression and the Americas 1929-39* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 68.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 69.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

families, substantially lower than the minimum amount of 100 dollars estimated for a family to survive.<sup>31</sup>

To help save plummeting economy, Roosevelt set up the National Recovery Administration, in which the National Recovery Act was implemented. This act, "...encouraged industries to agree to a series of codes of practices covering issues such as child labour, long hours, low pay, and labour relations."<sup>32</sup> If companies followed the codes, they could show the NRA logo of an eagle, which had the slogan, "We do our part."<sup>33</sup> While many companies did join, many historians argue the act was unsuccessful in that large companies were able to take away competition from smaller ones.<sup>34</sup> Historian Robert McElvaine agreed that it did not help small businesses the same way it did large, writing, "The NRA allowed big businesses to protect their profits through 'self government'."<sup>35</sup> Historians also noted there did not seem to be any economic gain from the act. Historian Anthony Badger disapproved of the NRA writing, "[The NRA] did not yield the economic benefits that might have offset business's alarms. The NRA only restored modest profitability to American business, if it restored any at all."<sup>36</sup> Historian Amity Schlaes agreed that the NRA was not beneficial to the United States writing, "...The National Recovery Administration did damage...NRA rules were so stringent they perversely hurt business. They frightened away capital, and they discouraged employers from hiring

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 71.

<sup>35</sup> Robert S. McElvaine, *The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941* (New York: Times Books, 1993), 168.

<sup>36</sup> Anthony J. Badger, *The New Deal: The Depression Years, 1933-40* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1989), 92-93.

workers.”<sup>37</sup> Schlaes also argued that the laws from the NRA “...were so broad that no one knew how they would be interpreted.”<sup>38</sup>

Similarly to the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Public Works Administration (PWA) used employed workers.<sup>39</sup> Instead of using them for the environment, the PWA used the workers to help create and build large public works projects. From 1933-1939, given a budget of 3.3 billion dollars, the workers created 13,000 schools and 50,000 miles of roads, leading to safer transportation and more education for schoolchildren.<sup>40</sup> Historians agree the Public Works Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps both improved the nation’s infrastructure.<sup>41</sup> They also agree both the CCC and the PWA increased the value of the community and area by planting trees, creating roads, and building post offices and municipal buildings.<sup>42</sup>

In the United States, before the New Deal was made, 4 out of 10 people owned homes.<sup>43</sup> Most Americans rented because expensive down payments usually had to be made. Instead of down payments of 30 percent, the New Deal challenged the system and down payments were lowered down to 10 percent.<sup>44</sup> Many people were scared their house was going to be evicted after they could not pay their mortgages because of the impact of the Depression. With the Home Owners Loan Act passed in June 1933, dates were made flexible for a longer amount of time on

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<sup>37</sup> Amity Schlaes, *The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007), 8.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>39</sup> Nick Fellows and Mike Wells, *The Great Depression and the Americas 1929-39* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 71.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Burton W. Folsom, *New Deal or Raw Deal?: How FDR's Economic Legacy Has Damaged America* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2008), 110.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*, 370.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

getting the money in.<sup>45</sup> After this act was passed, 2/3 of the American population owned homes and 1 percent, mostly the poor lived in public housing.<sup>46</sup> Historian Robert McElvaine agreed that the act was effective saying that “The Home Owners’ Loan Corporation plainly helped many small homeowners, but this certainly was no attack on the system. It saved mortgage holders as well as homeowners.”<sup>47</sup>

One of the most both influential and controversial acts on the economy was the Tennessee Valley Authority Act passed in May 1933.<sup>48</sup> The Tennessee Valley was composed of many weak states in which “...2% of farmers had electricity”<sup>49</sup> in their homes. In this act, unemployed workers made dams that generated electricity through hydroelectric power. The dams also contributed to making farms healthier by helping topsoil not get washed away from the floods.<sup>50</sup> Many historians consider the creation of this act to be very beneficial to the nation’s economy. It stimulated economic growth as well as making a 650-mile waterway, which opened the possibility of trade within the region.<sup>51</sup> This act made an “...increase in average income in the region by 200 percent in the period from 1929 to 1949, and an increase in the supply of electricity to farms from 2 percent in 1932 to 75 percent by 1945.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Nick Fellows and Mike Wells, *The Great Depression and the Americas 1929-39* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 72.

<sup>46</sup> David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*, 370.

<sup>47</sup> Robert S. McElvaine, *The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941* (New York: Times Books, 1993), 168.

<sup>48</sup> Nick Fellows and Mike Wells, *The Great Depression and the Americas 1929-39* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 72.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Nick Fellows and Mike Wells, *The Great Depression and the Americas 1929-39* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 72.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 73.

However, despite the improvements, many historians argue that the Act weakened the economy because 98 percent of the population lived outside of the Tennessee Valley, in which they had to be taxed to provide benefits to 2 percent of the population.<sup>53</sup> Historians use economist Henry Hazlitt's statement to support their arguments: "We must make an effort of the imagination to see the private power plants, the private homes, the typewriters and [after 1950] the television sets that were never allowed to come into existence because of the money that was taken from the people all over the country to build the photogenic Norris Dam."<sup>54</sup>

After the first New Deal, historians have mixed opinions on its effectiveness. Historian William Leuchtenberg positively said, "It is hard to think of another period in the whole history of the republic that was so fruitful or a crisis that was met with such imagination."<sup>55</sup> Despite this, historians Howard Zinn, Paul Conkin, and Barton Bernstein didn't approve of the first New Deal. Bernstein wrote that the New Deal "Failed to solve the problem of the Depression, ... failed to raise the impoverished and failed to redistribute income."<sup>56</sup> Many critics of the New Deal also accused Roosevelt of moving towards socialism with having too much government control on controlling prices, jobs, and taxes. Many wealthy people, especially Republicans, thought it was unfair to be paying higher taxes. Some people compared Roosevelt to Stalin in that they felt they were losing American freedom and liberty.<sup>57</sup> In addition to historians' viewpoints, the Supreme Court found many proposals to be unconstitutional. In total, eleven laws made by the New Deal

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<sup>53</sup> Burton W. Folsom, *New Deal or Raw Deal?: How FDR's Economic Legacy Has Damaged America* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2008), 101.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

were claimed unconstitutional including the Farm Mortgage Act and the National Industrial Recovery Act.<sup>58</sup>

### The 2<sup>nd</sup> New Deal

Roosevelt's second New Deal addressed poor people and small businesses.<sup>59</sup> While his intent of the first New Deal was not to be radical with his ideas, he made the second more radical than the first to put down critics, especially those made by Huey Long, who said the first New Deal was not robust enough to be successful.<sup>60</sup>

Workers were skeptical of joining unions for fear their employers would punish them. The National Labor Relations Act published in July of 1935, "...forced employers to recognise unions, ... forbade the sacking of workers for being union members, ... gave workers some legal protection, and ... established the National Labor Relations Board, which allowed unions to negotiate wages and conditions."<sup>61</sup> Union membership increased "...3.7 million in 1935 to 8.5 million by 1940."<sup>62</sup> Taking membership in unions was beneficial to workers because it made them feel more united, which allowed them to feel more comfortable speaking out against working conditions and payment.

Under the Works Progress Administration made in April of 1935,<sup>63</sup> Roosevelt gave a budget of 45.5 billion dollars for the unemployed to find work in job creation work schemes. Skilled workers worked on construction projects whereas non-skilled workers worked in offices,

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 81.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 82.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 83.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

or as actors, artists, or photographers.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, the National Youth Administration was set up for youths.<sup>65</sup> However, despite the growing number of jobs, historians argue the New Deal did not help the unemployed as well as it planned to. According to Kennedy, “In the ninth year of the Great Depression and the sixth year of Roosevelt’s New Deal, with more than ten million workers still unemployed, America had still not found a formula for economic recovery.”<sup>66</sup>

Before August 14, 1935, when the Social Security Act passed,<sup>67</sup> it was tough for the disabled who could not work, the unemployed that just lost their jobs, and the elderly who were too weak to work. Since workers had to help pay their parents who could not work, feed the family, and pay bills, retirement was mostly a luxury reserved for the wealthy. Especially with low wages, families could not set aside enough money for retirement.<sup>68</sup> During the Great Depression, families struggled in just supporting themselves, and could not give extra money to a family member in need.<sup>69</sup> The act consisted of three titles that helped the elderly, unemployed, and the disabled. The first two titles “...created an insurance program for the elderly and paid benefits to the elderly poor who could not afford to pay Social Security taxes.”<sup>70</sup> Under Title III, workers who were recently unemployed received benefits.<sup>71</sup> Each month, employers and workers would be taxed “...at one percent of an employee’s income up to \$3,000.”<sup>72</sup>

Despite the praise from some historians on how the Social Security Act prevented more poverty, some say that the act was biased in that it did not apply to agricultural or domestic

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>66</sup> David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*, 362.

<sup>67</sup> Richard Worth, *Social Security Act* (New York: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark, 2010), 17.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 32.

workers, where blacks were plentiful in this field of work. One historian commented on this issue saying the act “Was the product of a society that was profoundly invested in the maintenance of white privilege.”<sup>73</sup> Passed in 1935, women were excluded from gaining its benefits, prompting one female historian to write the exclusion of women was because of “Entitlements on white masculine employment categories and patterns- primarily full- time preferably unionized, continuous, industrial breadwinning work.”<sup>74</sup> Despite the act preventing some citizens from going into poverty, its biases towards white males prevented other races and women from getting the same benefits.

### The Third New Deal

Before and during the Depression child labor was prevalent throughout cities. Children would be found doing work in dangerous spots of factories or mine fields. The Fair Labor Standards Act signed in the summer of 1938, prohibited the use of children under 18 in work that would be “particularly hazardous.”<sup>75</sup> However, historian Jeremy Felt said the act was hard to enforce and regulate saying that “In those areas where children are useful they continue to be employed.”<sup>76</sup>

In the mid-1920s as aviation took off in the United States, safety prompted concern for passengers. With the Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938, the federal government gained control in

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<sup>73</sup> Edward D. Berkowitz, *Robert Ball and the Politics of Social Security* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 21.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> William G. Whittaker, *Child Labor in America: History, Policy, and Legislative Issues* (New York: Novinka Books, 2004), 8.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.



making air transportation safer.<sup>77</sup> Passenger terminals were added, runways were made safer, and control towers were given updated technologies. Engineers were hired to especially the major airports, like LaGuardia, to design safer, contemporary designs for passengers.<sup>78</sup>

### Impact on Minorities

Throughout the nation's past, American Indians were not treated as equals in the United States. They were pushed farther west, away from their homelands on the Trail of Tears, as they were forced into assimilation. The Indian Reorganization Act prohibited land allotment by the government and tribes were allowed to form their own governments.<sup>79</sup> Before the act was passed, American Indians could not hold onto their own land, as the government was allowed to remove it. With this act, tribes were able to partially hold on and gain control of their own land.<sup>80</sup> Historian Jeremy Felt said the act was successful in that it ended "Assaults on Native American peoplehood...allotment was given up...boarding schools were deemphasized; tribal quasi states were allowed to exist; Indian art was officially patronized and protected; and the tribes gained autonomy in managing the natural resources that they still possessed."<sup>81</sup>

During the Depression, blacks struggled, some historians say more than whites did. During this time, whites replaced continued to replace them in their jobs. Consequently, "in 1930, 50 percent of blacks were unemployed."<sup>82</sup>In order to help discriminated blacks, the New

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<sup>77</sup> "History," History, , accessed September 01, 2016, [https://www.faa.gov/about/history/brief\\_history/](https://www.faa.gov/about/history/brief_history/).

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Sascha T. Scott, *A Strange Mixture: The Art and Politics of Painting Pueblo Indians*, 192.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> "American Experience: TV's Most-watched History Series.," PBS, , accessed August 24, 2016, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/dustbowl-great-depression/>.

Deal tried to create more equality between the races. Even though the New Deal didn't challenge Jim Crow laws, some historians feel it did open up job possibilities for blacks with the [Civilian Conservation Corps], [Works Progress Administration], and the [Public Works Administration].<sup>83</sup> By 1935, the Works Progress Administration employed around 350,000 blacks.<sup>84</sup> By 1938, there were more than 350,00 blacks working under the Civilian Conservation Corps.<sup>85</sup> Also during the new educational programs that were set up by the New Deal, over 1 million black schoolchildren were taught how to read and write. With enabling them this tool, the children were able to learn an education in school, and have a better chance at getting a job.<sup>86</sup>

Historian David Woolner commented on how the New Deal affected equal rights for African Americans: "It did not bring to an end the tremendous injustices that African Americans had to suffer on a day to day basis...[but] it was during the New Deal, that the silent invisible hand of racism was fully exposed as a national issue."<sup>87</sup> While the injustices of unfair pay, segregation, and discrimination didn't go away during the New Deal, Woolner positively wrote, "...the willingness of the Roosevelt Administration to recognize the existence of a racial problem ...made it clear that the federal government had a responsibility to ensure the civil rights of all Americans were protected."<sup>88</sup> The spotlight of racial inequality eventually led to fairer laws that were not unconstitutional for blacks.

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<sup>83</sup> David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*, 378.

<sup>84</sup> "African Americans and the New Deal: A Look Back in History - Roosevelt Institute," Roosevelt Institute, 2010, accessed August 24, 2016, <http://rooseveltinstitute.org/african-americans-and-new-deal-look-back-history/>.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

## Conclusion

My topic, Franklin Delano Roosevelt's involvement in the Great Depression, was centered on examining the acts Roosevelt signed in the New Deal throughout his presidency. The various acts I had described under the three forms of the New Deal showed that Roosevelt addressed agriculture, banking, unemployment, housing, aviation, the economy, and business while in office. The Great Depression impacted the United States as unemployment increased drastically, people starved, and homeowners lost their homes. Despite the improvements some acts created, my research also shows how multiple acts weren't as effective as Roosevelt planned. From the information I researched, I can conclude that although not drastically, Roosevelt's actions with the New Deal were effective in helping the United States get out of the Depression.

Despite criticism with some of Roosevelt's acts, the evidence I have gathered with my research still supports my conclusion. Before the New Deal was made, unemployment was rapidly increasing. The New Deal enabled the public to get jobs whether it was through building public works or helping the environment. Even though workers were given low pay and had a time limit on how many months they could work, it still temporarily helped families eat and pay bills. Not only did the New Deal help people without jobs but it also helped people who could no longer work. With the Security Act, retirement could be an option for middle and lower class seniors, not just for the wealthy who had enough money saved throughout their life. Throughout the Great Depression, banks were collapsing at an increasing rate. The New Deal created an insurance in which the public would get their deposits back if a bank were to shut down. This insurance was effective in building trust with the banking system, and has kept banks open throughout the years. Farmers struggled in maintaining a living as their prices plummeted with

overproducing crops. The New Deal was effective in raising prices back up, as farmers were paid not to produce more food on their farmlands. Roosevelt's plan on agriculture, helped farmers' standards of living as their income increased substantially throughout the years. Roosevelt's acts helped the United States by stimulating the economy. By trying to improve the public's standard of living, people were able to go out and spend money, which kept businesses and the overall economy alive. Roosevelt's acts strengthening the overall economy contributed to the United States getting out of the Great Depression. Despite this, many historians believe that it was the coming of WWII that made the United States get out of the Depression. A further investigation could look into how WWII played a role in ending the Great Depression.

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