

FDR's Influence as president

Some have called him the best president yet. Others have even claimed that he was the world's most influential and successful leader of the twentieth century. Those claims can be backed up by the overwhelming support that he received from his citizens throughout his four terms in office. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt began a new era in American history by ending the Great Depression that the country had fallen into in

1929. His social reforms gave people a new perspective on government. Government was not only expected to protect the people from foreign invaders, but to protect against

poverty and joblessness. Roosevelt had shown his military and diplomatic skill as the Commander in Chief during World War II. This wartime leadership and international relations policy won him an award in the hearts of many Americans.

Roosevelt threw his hat in the ring in 1931 in order to prepare for the election of 1932. Democratic Party chairman James A Farley directed his campaign. He started a nationwide radio address, outlining a program to meet the economic problems of the nation. He coined the term "forgotten man" to mean all of those who had been hard hit by the evils of the depression. These radio addresses were the start to what he called the "fireside chats". Overall, Roosevelt was the most energetic and dynamic candidate, and he was nominated by the party on the fourth ballot. Although he displayed excellent characteristics, his competition was fairly tough. He was up against

John Nance Garner of Texas (who would be his Vice Presidential running mate); Newton

D. Baker of Ohio, who was former Secretary of War; and former Governor Alfred E. Smith of New York. For three ballots, Roosevelt held a large lead, but lacked the two-thirds margin necessary for victory. Farley then promised John Garner the vice presidential nomination, which he accepted grudgingly. Then FDR took the presidential nomination on the fourth ballot.

One of the purposes of the national convention is to bring the party together in a movement of support behind the nominated candidate. Although there was rough competition during the choosing process, most party leaders were happy with the Roosevelt choice. It would help pull votes from the urban-Eastern region of the country.

Also, Roosevelt made a dashing introduction at the Chicago convention by being the first

nominee to ever write an acceptance speech. In this speech, he brought emotions from the audience in his last line, "I pledge to you, I pledge to myself, to a new deal for the American people."

During the November campaign against Hoover, Roosevelt suggested a few parts of the so called "New Deal". He spoke of relief and public works money. He wanted to

develop a plan to cut agricultural overproduction. He was for public power, conservation and unemployment insurance. The repeal of prohibition and stock exchange regulation were also big items on his platform.

However, other than the aforementioned items, Roosevelt was quite vague about other plans. He mentioned little about his plans for industrial recovery or labor laws. As much foreign policy experience as he had, he talked very little of it during the campaign. Many believe that he was simply trying to home in on the problems that the American public saw most prominent at the time.

When it came to election day, Roosevelt was the only viable alternative to Hoover, who many blamed for the Great Depression, although critics argue that it was the presidents preceding the Hoover Administration. The outcome reflected this thinking: Roosevelt won 22,821,857 votes compared to Hoover's 15,761,841. Roosevelt also won the electoral 472 to 59. The voters had sent large majorities of Democrats to both houses as well, which would enable Roosevelt to accomplish more by pushing through more bills.

Roosevelt's second election was in 1936. The Democratic National Convention re-nominated him by acclamation-- no vote was even taken. Vice President Garner was

also nominated. The Republican opponents were Governor Alfred M. Landon of Kansas and Frank Knox, a newspaper publisher. Republicans, seeing Roosevelt's overwhelming

popularity, were reaching for a tomato to throw. They claimed that he had not kept his promise to the people to balance the budget. Roosevelt replied by pointing to the actions of fighting the depression and returning the nation to prosperity to precedence over the budget.

As expected, Roosevelt won by a landslide. He received 27,751,491 popular votes and carried 46 states with 523 electoral votes. His opponent only received 16,679,491 popular votes and 2 states with 8 electorals. This reflected the nation's confidence in the man and his leadership ability. However, the nation still had a long way to go. He stated in his inauguration address, "I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, and ill-nourished".

After another over-all successful term, Roosevelt ran again in 1940. The Democratic Party broke precedent with his re-nomination. There were some party members that felt it was unfair to elect him again, so his margins of popularity fell slightly. This time, he was not the only one up for the nomination. There was

James

Farley, who received 72 13/30 votes, previous Vice President John Nance Garner, receiving 61 votes; Millard Tydings of Maryland, receiving 9 1/2 votes; and Cordell Hull,

former Secretary of State, who received only 5 2/3 votes. Secretary of Agriculture Henry

A. Wallace was chosen as a Vice Presidential running mate. The Republicans nominated

Wendell Wilkie of Indiana, a corporation president, to oppose the Roosevelt/Wallace team. The two candidates had some similar views. Wilkie supported Roosevelt's foreign

policy and favored many New Deal programs already in effect. However, Wilkie opposed the controls that the Democratic Administration had put on business.

To obtain more Republican support for this campaign, Roosevelt used his executive power of appointment to appoint two republicans to his Cabinet in 1940.

The

first was Henry L. Stimson for Secretary of War, who held the office under the Taft Administration. He also held the office of Secretary of State under President Hoover.

Stimson replaced Harry Woodring who was regarded as isolationist. Roosevelt's previous

opponent who ran for as Vice President on the republican side, newspaper publisher Frank Knox, was placed as the Secretary of the Navy.

The Republicans based their campaign on the tradition that no President had ever

gone for a third term in succession. To counter this, Roosevelt put the spotlight on his

administration's achievements. Because of the risky situation abroad, many felt that

Roosevelt's expertise was needed if war occurred.

The election results were closer this time than the previous two times.

Roosevelt

received 27,243,466 popular votes and 449 electoral votes. Wilkie received 22,334,413

popular votes and 82 electoral votes.

When it was time for Roosevelt's third term to end, he initially said he wanted to

retire. However, he later declared that he felt it was his duty to serve if his country called

on him. Much of this feeling was based on the idea that it would be a bad thing for the

country to change leadership in the middle of the war. Many of the president's advisors

felt he would not live through a fourth term, considering his heart disease, hypertension,

and other cardiac problems. Because of his condition, the Vice President nomination for

the 1944 election was of utmost importance. Roosevelt was persuaded to drop Henry Wallace, whom many regarded as too liberal and emotionally unsuited to be president.

Harry Truman of Missouri was chosen to fill the spot. Although Roosevelt received party

nomination on the first ballot, there were two other candidates: Harry Byrd (89 votes)

and James Farley--again-- (1 vote).

The Republicans nominated Thomas Dewey of New York for President and John Bricker of Ohio for Vice President. Again, their argument was term length. No President should serve for 16 years, they declared. The opposing argument by the Democrats was that no country should "change horses in mid-stream". Roosevelt drove around the streets of New York City in a rainstorm and then made a speech to show that

his health was not a major issue.

The election outcome was even slimmer this time, but Roosevelt still captured a hearty vote. Roosevelt received 25,602,505 votes and 432 electoral votes and his Republican opponent received 22,013,372 popular votes and 99 electoral votes.

Many of the advisers who helped Roosevelt during his presidential campaigns continued to aid him after he entered the White House. Below are the four cabinets:

FIRST TERM

March 4, 1933-January 20, 1937

POSITION INDUCTION	NAME/ STATE	DATE OF
Secretary of State:	Cordell Hull, TN	3/4/33
Secretary of Treasury:	William Hartman Woodin, NY	3/4/33
	Henry Morgenthau, Jr., NY	1/1/34
Secretary of War:	George Henry Dern, UT	3/4/33
	Harry Woodring, KA	9/25/36-
5/6/37		
Attorney General:	Homer Stille Cummings, CN	3/4/33
Postmaster General:	James A. Farley, NY	3/4/33
Secretary of the Navy:	Claude A. Swanson, VA	3/4/33
Secretary of Interior:	Harold Ickes, IL**	3/4/33
Secretary of Agriculture	Henry A. Wallace, IW	3/4/33
Secretary of Commerce:	Daniel Calhoun Roper, SC	3/4/33
Secretary of Labor:	Frances Perkins, NY*	3/4/33

\* first female to be appointed to the Cabinet

\*\*previously the leader of the Chicago NAACP

SECOND TERM

January 20, 1937-January 20, 1941

POSITION INDUCTION	NAME/STATE	DATE OF
Secretary of State previous admn.	Cordell Hull, TN	from
Secretary of Treasury: previous admn.	Henry Morgenthau, Jr., NY	from
Secretary of War: 5/6/37	Harry Woodring	from previous-
	Henry L. Stimson, NY	7/10/40
Attorney General: previous-1/17/40	Homer Stille Cummings, CN	from
	Robert Houghwout Jackson, NY	1/18/40
Postmaster General: previous-9/1/40	James A. Farley, NY	from
	Frank C. Walker, PA	9/10/40
Secretary of Navy: previous-7/7/39	Claude Swanson, VA	from
	Charles Edison, NJ	8/5/39-

1/12/40			
Secretary of the Interior:	Frank Knox, IL	7/10/40	
previous	Harold Ickes, IL		from
Secretary of Agriculture:	Henry A. Wallace, IW		from
previous			
Secretary of Commerce:	Claude Raymond Wickard, IN	8/27/40	
	Daniel C. Roper, SC		from previous
	Harry Hopkins, NY		12/24/38
	Jesse Jones, TX	9/16/40	
Secretary of Labor:	Francis Perkins, NY		from
previous			

THIRD TERM

January 20, 1941-January 20, 1945

POSITION INDUCTION	NAME/STATE	DATE OF	
Secretary of State:	Cordell Hull, TN		from
previous			
Secretary of Treasury:	Edward Stettinius, VA	11/30/44	
previous	Henry Morgenthau, Jr., NY		from
Secretary of War:	Henry L. Stimson, NY		from
previous			
Attorney General:	Robert Jackson, NY		from
previous			
Postmaster General:	Francis Biddle, PA	9/5/41	
previous	Frank Walker, PA		from
Secretary of the Navy:	Frank Knox, IL		from previous-
4/28/44			
Secretary of the Interior:	James Vincent Forrestal, NY	6/18/44	
previous	Harold Ickes, IL		from
Secretary of Agriculture:	Claude Wickard, IN		from
previous			
Secretary of Commerce:	Jesse Jones, TX		from previous
Secretary of Labor:	Francis Perkins, NY		from
previous			

FOURTH TERM

January 20, 1945- April 12, 1945

POSITION INDUCTION	NAME/STATE	DATE OF	
Secretary of State:	Edward Stettinius, VA		from previous
Secretary of Treasury:	Henry Morganthau, Jr. NY		from
previous			
Secretary of War:	Henry Stimson, NY		from
previous			
Attorney General:	Francis Biddle, PA		from
previous			
Postmaster General:	Frank Walker, PA		from
previous			
Secretary of the Navy:	James Forrestal, NY		from
previous			
Secretary of the Interior	Harold Ickes, IL		from
previous			
Secretary of Agriculture:	Claude Wickard, IN		from

previous  
Secretary of Commerce: Jesse Jones, TX from previous  
Henry Wallace 3/1/45  
Secretary of Labor: Frances Perkins, NY from  
previous

By the time Roosevelt was inaugurated on March 4, 1933, the economic situation was desperate. Between 13 and 15 million Americans were unemployed. Of these, between 1 and 2 million people were wandering about the country looking for jobs. Thousands lived in cardboard shacks called "hoovervilles". Even more were standing in bread lines hoping to get a few crumbs for their family. Panic-stricken people hoping to rescue their deposits had forced 38 states to close their banks. The Depression hit all levels of the social scale-- heads of corporations and Wall Street bankers were left on the street begging-- "brother, can you spare a dime?" became the catch phrase of the era.

Roosevelt's action would be two parted: restore confidence and rebuild the economic and social structure. In one of his addresses, he pushed confidence with his statement, "the only thing we have to fear, is fear itself". It is here where he would push his presidential powers farther than almost any other president in history during peacetime. He made the bold request to Congress to allow him "broad executive power

to wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were invaded by a foreign foe."

One of his first steps was to take action upon the bank problem. Because of the Depression, there were "runs" to the bank that people were making to pull their deposits out in return for paper cash and gold. Many banks were not fit to handle this rush.

Roosevelt declared a "bank holiday" that began on March 6, 1933 and lasted for four days. All banks in the nation were closed until the Department of Treasury could examine each one's fiscal situation. Those that were determined to be in sound financial condition were allowed to reopen. Those that were questionable were looked at more deeply. Those banks who had been badly operated were not allowed to reopen.

During the FDR administration, 5,504 banks had closed and deposits of nearly \$3.5 billion dollars were lost.

Shortly after the President restored confidence in the banks, what is now known as the "100 days" began on March 9 and ended on June 16, 1933. The President at once began to submit recovery and reform laws for congressional approval. Congress passed

nearly all the important bills that he requested, most of them by large majorities. The

fact that there was a Democratic party majority in both houses helped speed things along.

What emerged from these 100 days was a 3-fold focus, RELIEF-RECOVERY-REFORM.

One of the relief actions was known as the Emergency Relief Act. This established the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and he pushed an appropriation of \$500 million to be spent immediately for quick relief. Harry Hopkins

was appointed to the head of FERA as the Federal Relief Administrator.

The Reforestation Act of 1933 killed two birds with one stone. First it helped

stop and repair some of the environmental damage that had occurred as a result of the

industrial revolution. More importantly, however, it created the Civilian Conservation

Corps, which eventually employed more than 2 1/2 million men at various camps.

Projects included reforestation, road construction, soil erosion and flood control as well

as national park development.

The Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) was designed to raise crop prices and raise the standard of living for American farmers. Production was cut to increase demand, therefore raising the price. Also, various subsidies were set up to add to the

farmers income. It also gave the president the power to inflate the currency by devaluating its gold content or the free coinage of silver and issue about \$3 billion in

paper currency. The AAA was later struck down as unconstitutional by the US Supreme

Court-- US vs. Butler.

The National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), another recovery measure, was designed to balance the interests of business and labor and consumers/workers and to

reduce unemployment. This act set codes of anti-trust laws and fair competition, as well

as setting a new standard-- minimum wage. Section 7A of the law guaranteed collective

bargaining rights to workers. NIRA also established the Public Works Administration

(PWA), which supervised the building of roads and public buildings at a cost of \$3.3

billion to Uncle Sam.

A new idea came about in those 100 days, it was known as the federal corporation. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) was the first agency to work much

like a private enterprise. The goal of the TVA was to reform one of the poorest parts of

the country, the Tennessee River Valley. The TVA was responsible for the construction

and management of power plants, dams, electricity, flood control systems and the development of navigation systems.

The Federal Securities Act required the government to register and approve all

issues of stocks and bonds. This act also created the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), which regulates exchanges and transactions of securities.

Other reforms included the Home Owners Refinancing Act, which established mortgage money for homeowners to refinance and the Banking Act of 1933, which created the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. It was empowered to guarantee individual bank deposits up to \$5000.

After the initial 100 days, reform continued throughout the first part of the Roosevelt Administration. In November, 1933, the Civil Works Administration was created by executive order, which provided temp jobs during the winter of 1933-34. The Gold Reserve Act helped fix some of the problems of the economy at the roots. First all gold was transferred from the Federal Reserve to the National Treasury. FDR was also empowered to fix the values of the dollar by weighing its value in gold. He later set the price of gold at \$35 per ounce, which in turn stabilized markets. The Silver Purchase Act followed, allowing the government to have not only gold in the Treasury, but Silver as well-- valued at 1/3 the price of gold. The Communications Act of 1934 established one

of the most active federal agencies today, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Its general purpose was to monitor radio, telegraph, and telephone communications.

In Roosevelt's Annual Address to Congress on January 4, 1935, he outlined two of the New Deal, whose main component would be the establishment of the modern welfare system. The federal government would withdraw from the direct relief, leaving it up to state and local governments. A program of social reforms would also be included in the second half of the New Deal. This would include social security for the aged, unemployed and ill, as well as slum clearance and better housing.

One of the first acts of the New Deal, Phase II was the Emergency Relief Act. By Executive Order, Roosevelt created three new relief agencies in 1935. The first would be the Work Progress Administration (WPA), which would spend \$11 billion on temporary construction jobs. Schools, theaters, museums, airfields, parks and post offices were constructed as a result. This increased the national purchasing power.

Another part of the Emergency Relief Act was the Resettlement Administration (RA). Its goals were to improve the condition of farm families not already benefiting from AAA, prevent waste by unprofitable farming operations or improper land use and projects such as flood control and reforestation. This agency also resettled poor families in "subsistence homestead communities". These were basic suburbs constructed for the city's poor workers. Many times, these communities were known as "greenbelt towns" because of their proximity to open space. Two model suburbs were set up-- Greenbelt

in Washington DC and Greenhills in Cincinnati. Another aid to the farmer was the Rural Electrification Administration (REA). Its goals were to provide electricity to

isolated

areas where private utility companies did not see it profitable to run lines and set up service.

The year of 1935 brought with it numerous reform efforts. These were the final efforts of the New Deal before the nation geared up for war. Included in this was the National Labor Relations Act, whose most important function was to set up the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), which monitored corporations to ensure worker rights and safety. The National Housing Act created the US Housing Authority (USHA) to administer low-interest 60-year loans to small communities for slum clearance and construction projects. This agency also gave subsidies to those landlords willing to offer low-income housing. A Revenue Act of 1935 capped off the New Deal with a tax on the rich, and a tax break on the middle classmen.

One of the most important and lasting effects of the Roosevelt Administration was his into push for the Social Security Act of 1935. This was an innovative plan that was supposed to lead to a nation-wide retirement system. It also established a cooperative federal-state welfare system/unemployment system. A tax was levied on the

employee, which was met dollar for dollar by the employer. This tax went into a special fund operated by the Social Security Administration. Later in life, when a person reached retirement, they could draw the money out of this account that they had placed in for the last few decades.

The Supreme Court was fairly conservative, and attempted to shoot holes in many of Roosevelt's New Deal Programs. It felt that Roosevelt had taken his legislative presidential power to recommend legislation too far, and that Congress was equally responsible for allowing him to usurp the powers for reasons of what Roosevelt claimed was a "national emergency". In a statement made in May of 1935, one of the Supreme Court Justices announced that "Congress had delegated virtually unfettered powers to the [Roosevelt] Administration.-- something truly inconsistent with the constitutional prerogatives and duties of Congress." The Supreme Court even went as far as to strike the entire AAA program down, claiming that it violated state's rights.

FDR was infuriated at the actions of the Court. He thought of them as nine old men who were living in days gone by-- far too conservative to see the economic and social needs of today. He soon began to plan retribution, however in secrecy. Two days after inviting the Justices to a formal social function at the White House, he called upon his staff to write up the Judicial Reform Act of 1937. Essentially, this document alleged that the Judicial Branch of the federal government was overwhelmed. The Act described

a desperate situation in which reform and recovery issues were not flowing through government on a timely basis--simply because the Supreme Court was backed up. His answer to solve the dilemma was to use his executive power of appointment and place more Justices on the Court. Another section of the Act suggested that at age 70 (most

of the Justices were above this age), each Justice would be supplemented with an additional

Justice. This meant up to 15 Supreme Court Justices serving at one time. Roosevelt

hoped to load the Court with social liberal Democrats who would not oppose his New Deal Programs. This became known as his "Court Packing Scheme".

The President can appoint Justices, however, they must be approved by Congress.

After a long period of embarrassing debate, the Senate rejected Roosevelt's proposal.

This, in turn, caused Roosevelt to reject the Senate. He set out on a mission to purge the

Democratic party of the moderate type thinker, replacing him with the ultra-liberal.

Roosevelt used his diplomatic and military powers in the later part of his Administration nearly as much as he used his executive and legislative powers in the first

half. At the time Roosevelt took office, the nation was surprisingly isolationistic. This

started in the late nineteenth century, and continued up to the Roosevelt Administration.

When the Great Depression hit in the 1930's, America became even more concerned with

its own problems. However, seeing the importance of a global view and seeing the possible impact of World War II, Roosevelt directed the country toward nations abroad.

Roosevelt described his foreign policy as that of a good neighbor. The phrase

came to be used to describe the US attitude toward the countries of Latin America. Under the policy, the United States took a stronger lead in promoting good will among

these nations. The Platt Amendment of 1901 gave the US the right to intervene in the

affairs of Cuba. In May of 1934, the government repealed this amendment. It also withdrew American occupation forces from some Caribbean republics, and settled long-

standing oil disputes with Mexico. Roosevelt was the first to sign reciprocal trade

agreements with the Latin American countries, including Brazil, Columbia, Costa Rica,

Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti and Nicaragua. In 1935, the US signed treaties of

non-aggression and conciliation with six Latin American nations. This desire to spread

ties across the Western Hemispheres led to reciprocal trade agreements with Canada. Roosevelt also used personal diplomacy by taking trips to various Latin

American

nations. In July, 1934, he became the first American president to visit South American in

his trip to Columbia. In 1936, he attended the Inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Peace, in Buenos Aires.

Roosevelt used his diplomatic power of recognition to resume trading between the Soviet Union and the US. The recognition was given to the Soviet government in November of 1933. This was the first attempt at civil relations since the Russian Revolution in 1917. In 1933, for the first time in 16 years, the two nations exchanged representatives.

In 1937, Japan, at war with China, attacked a US river gunboat, the USS Panay, on the Yangtze River, killing two US citizens. This event infuriated the American public as well as the Roosevelt Administration. However, the US protested the Japanese action rather than demanding action taken against them. Roosevelt used his diplomatic power and refused to recognize the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo in Northern China until there was an official apology. Shortly after Roosevelt's statement, Japan made an official

apology to the US and offered to pay for the damages in full.

Although Roosevelt set his sights upon a global society, many Americans disagreed. This school of thought led to the Neutrality Acts of the 1930's. These acts, passed by Congress, prohibited the US from furnishing weapons or supplies to any nation at war. President Roosevelt hoped that any more of these laws that would be enacted in

the future would allow more flexibility. He disliked the fact that these Acts treated all nations the same, whether a country had attacked another or not.

World War II began on September 1, 1939, when Germany invaded Poland. Still,

many Americans did not agree that the situation was as dangerous

Word Count: 4281