

Mr. Roosevelt Comes to Champaign County: An Examination of the New Deal

Fellowship Lesson 2009
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Champaign County Historical Archives

Lesson 6: Critics of FDR

FDR's New Deal changed the functions and purpose of government dramatically. The introduction of the welfare state did not sit well with Americans that believed that government should play a much smaller role socially and economically. In this lesson, students will examine five political cartoons from various publications during the 1930s to assess the political mood of the times.

[“The Best They Have to Offer”](#) N.Y. World-Telegram: Aug. 11, 1934

- Describe the three characters portrayed in the cartoon:
 - How does the artist depict the Republican Party (G.O.P.)?
 - Rugged individualism and Wall Street represent the 1920s...did they serve America well?
- Interpret the two slogans:
 - “Back to 1929”: Was the economy healthy then? Is this a new solution?
 - “Roosevelt is a Red”: In what way were FDR's policies “communistic”? Is this a fair criticism? Does it provide any new solutions to the problems of the era?
- Does this cartoon criticize FDR or does it criticize the critics of FDR?
- Consider present criticisms of President Obama by the Republicans. Does this cartoon apply today?

[“Follow the Leader”](#) New York Herald Tribune: April 29 1933

- How does the artist depict FDR? Vs. Congress?
- What are several of FDR's early accomplishments depicted here?
- If FDR is getting things done, how can this cartoon be a criticism of him?
- What does this cartoon say about checks and balances?
- What has President Obama done during his first year in office? How does it compare?

[“Depression Mud Hole”](#) Birmingham Age-Herald: Oct 2, 1933

- Who are the three characters in this cartoon?
- What is the donkey (Democrat) doing? How is he doing it?
- Why does the elephant (Republican) criticize his methods? What does he mean by “artificial devices”?
- Which side does the public appear to be taking?

- President Obama often cites that it was President Bush's failed policies that got us into the economic crisis.....are their similarities here?

[“National Recovery Boat”](#) Punch: June 5, 1933

- Who is the character in the boat? In the water?
- Is FDR taking “Uncle Sam” out of the water or throwing him back in?
- Interpret the quote: “I’m sorry, but the Supreme Court says I must chuck you back again.”
- Why would the Supreme Court reject FDR’s National Recovery Act?
- Do you believe it to be unconstitutional?
- How did FDR later try to remove this obstacle to his New Deal programs?
- Does this cartoon criticize FDR or the Supreme Court?
- The Supreme Court is currently conservative with many justices that are Republican appointees. Do you think that anything that Obama is doing could be construed as unconstitutional?

[“Show Me Those Guys \(boxing\)”](#) Washington Post: Dec. 4, 1935

- Describe the three main characters in this cartoon:
 - Who is the fighter in the near corner? (Uncle Sam) How does he look he is fairing in he fight? Can he go many more rounds?
 - Who is the trainer? (FDR) What is his expression like? Is he favorably depicted here?
 - Who is Uncle Sam’s opponent? (National Debt) What is happening to him with each round?
- Interpret FDR’s quote regarding how far this fight can go?
- Do you agree with FDR’s economists (the “well informed fans”) that supported deficit spending?
- Does this cartoon apply to President Obama today?

As homework, students must bring in an editorial or political cartoon about Barack Obama and his recovery programs. In short essay form, students can interpret the cartoon to be shared with the class. Students can point out similarities to the New Deal considering resistance to political change and social reform.