

Document 1

I want to tell you about an experience we had in Philadelphia when our private funds were exhausted and before public funds become available. . . .

One woman said she borrowed 50 cents from a friend and bought stale bread for 3 and a half cents per loaf, and that is all they had for eleven days except for one or two meals. . . . One woman went along the docks and picked up vegetables that fell from the wagons. Sometimes the fish vendors gave her fish at the end of the day. On two different occasions this family was without food for a day and a half. . . . Another family did not have food for two days. Then the husband went out and gathered dandelions and the family lived on them.

Senate Committee on Manufactures, 1932

| | 25 Year Old Waitress | 43 Year Old Housewife | 54 Year Old Molder |
|--|--|---|------------------------------|
| Chief Need | Money | Money | Money |
| Meaning of Money | Joys the rich have | Chance to educate children | No more relief orders |
| Chief Fear | Loss of job | Poverty | Things will never get better |
| Does the government owe you a living? | No | No | Thinks U.S. owes all a job |
| Who is responsible for depression? | The bankers and building an loan men | Drift away from church | Capitalism's greed |
| Would you farm if you had land? | Yes, if I knew how | No | No |
| Has religion helped you? | When things were worse | Almost by itself | No |
| Do you want government to plan the future? | Thinks the government can plan without restricting | Will abide by the plan that offers a better day | Wants help not advice |

(Columbus, Ohio) Citizen, 1934

Gilder Lehrman Institute

Questions

Question 1 (A): Describe the human toll of the Great Depression, mentioning at least 3 facts from the documents.

Question 1 (B): What did people think caused the Great Depression?

Document 2

"...This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself - nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory....

In such a spirit on my part and on yours we face our common difficulties. They concern, thank God, only material things. Values have shrunk to fantastic levels; taxes have risen; our ability to pay has fallen; government of all kinds is faced by serious curtailment of income; the means of exchange are frozen in the currents of trade; the withered leaves of industrial enterprise lie on every side; farmers find no markets for their produce; the savings of many years n thousands of families are gone....

Our greatest primary task is to put people to work. This is no unsolvable problem if we face it wisely and courageously. It can be accomplished in part by direct recruiting by the Government itself, treating the task as we would treat the emergency of a war, but at the same time, through this employment, accomplishing greatly needed project to stimulate and reorganize the use of our natural resources."

Source: F.D.R.'s First Inaugural Address, March, 1933,
<http://newdeal.feri.org/speeches/1933a.htm>

Questions

Question 2 (A): What are three of the difficulties F.D.R. outlines?

Question 2 (B): In this excerpt from F.D.R.'s First Inaugural Speech, how did he attempt to win support of the American people?

Question 2 (C): How does F.D.R. suggest the task of "putting people to work" could best be accomplished?

Question 2 (D): Based on this document, what did F.D.R. see as the role of the national government in times of crisis?

Document 3

New Deal Legislation

| | | |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1932 | Reconstruction Finance Corporation | Granted emergency loans to banks, life insurance companies, and railroads |
| 1933 | Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) | Employed youth in reforestation, road construction, and flood control projects |
| | Agricultural Adjustment Act | Direct payments to farmers to reduce production |
| | Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) | Creates independent public corporation to construct dams and power projects |
| | National Industrial Recovery Act | Establishes fair-competition codes; section 7a guarantees labor's right to organize Public Works Administration Public works |
| 1934 | Federal Housing Administration (FHA) | Insured home loans |
| 1935 | Works Progress Administration (WPA) | Employed 8 million on public works projects |
| | Social Security Act | Established unemployment compensation and old age insurance |
| | National Labor Relations Act | Creates National Labor Relations Board to prevent unfair labor Practices |
| 1937 | National Housing Act | Authorizes low rent public housing projects |
| 1938 | Fair Labor Standards Act | Established minimum wage of 40 cents an hour and a 40 hour workweek |

Questions

Question 3 (A): Which New Deal programs were intended to provide direct work for the unemployed?

Question 3 (B): Which program is still in effect today?

Question 3 (C): What can you assume is true about the relationship Congress had with F.D.R. during the New Deal?

Document 4

"He looked at me with keen eyes and announced, 'I can tell you the cause of this Depression. Don't know why everyone says, My Goodness! How did this depression happen? Easy to see how it came. Don't know why it didn't come sooner.... The depression really began along in the early (nineteen) hundreds when these damned unions began to form. Most of the men employed in large manufacturing plants, including the railroads, joined in with some union so they could compel the companies they worked for to pay them higher wages. Right there, the good feeling was destroyed between the men that did the hiring and the men that worked for them.

They commenced to have strikes, stand up strikes and sit down strikes. That wasn't good either for labor or for the owners of the mills, who had millions invested in their buildings and railroads. Both the laboring man and the financier spent their time figuring how they could beat each other instead of having good feelings. The owners began to pay out their money for all kinds of new machinery to do away with having so many men working. Then, you see, there were more men to work than there was work for them to do....And things kept getting worse....and the bad feelings kept getting worse.... And people aren't self reliant the way they used to be."

Source: Interview with Mr. Frederick Savage, "A Yankee Roamer Speaks His Mind." *American Life Histories*, 1936-1940, Library of Congress

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/timeline/depwwii/unions/blame.html>

Questions

Question 4 (A): What is Mr. Savage's view about the causes of the Great Depression?

Question 4 (B): Based on this excerpt, how do you think Mr. Savage feels about the role of workers in times of economic crisis?

Document 5

"Songs and Yells of Steel Workers"

(Tune: "Over There")

C.I.O. - C.I.O.

Here we go, we will grow, that we know,

For our ranks are stronger,

We're weak no longer

We'll win our fight against the foe,

C.I.O. - C.I.O.

In the mills, in the shops, mines below,

We know what's wise now, we'll organize now

Into one big union

The C.I.O.

(Tune: "Polly Wolly Doodle")

To win our strike and our demands

Come and picket on the picket line,

In one strong union we'll join hands

Come and picket on the picket line.

On the line, On the line

Come and picket on the picket line,

We will shout and yell and fight like hell

Come and picket on the picket line.

Source: Interview with Ida and William Rinas American Life Histories, 1936-1940, Library of Congress

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/timeline/depwwii/union/labsongs.html>

Questions

Question 5 (A): What are two messages contained in the above song lyrics?

Question 5 (B): Why did workers feel a need to unionize during the Great Depression?

Document 6

"I hope that you have re-read the Constitution of the United States in these past few weeks.... Since the rise of the modern movement for social and economic progress through legislation, the Court has more and more often and more and more boldly asserted a power to veto laws passed by the Congress and State Legislatures in complete disregard of this original limitation...The Court has been acting not as a judicial body, but as a policy-making body....

The Court, in addition to the proper use of its judicial functions, has improperly set itself up as a third house of the Congress - a super-legislature, as one of the justices has called it - reading into the Constitution words and implications which are not there, and which were never intended to be there. We have, therefore, reached the point as a nation where we must take action to save the Constitution from the Court and the Court from itself....

What is my proposal? It is simply this: whenever a Judge or Justice of any Federal Court has reached the age of seventy and does not avail himself of the opportunity to retire on a pension, a new member shall be appointed by the President then in office, with the approval, as required by the Constitution, of the Senate of the United States. That plan has two chief purposes. By bringing into the judicial system a steady and continuing stream of new and younger blood, I hope, first, to make the administration of all Federal justice speedier and, therefore, less costly; secondly, to bring to the decision of social and economic problems younger men who have had personal experience and contact with modern facts and circumstances under which average men have to live and work....

Those opposing this plan have sought to arouse prejudice and fear by crying that I am seeking to "pack" the Supreme Court and that a baneful precedent will be established. Is it a dangerous precedent for the Congress to change the number of justices? The Congress has always had, and will have, that power...."

Source: F.D.R.'s Fireside Chat on Reorganization of the Judiciary, March 9, 1937, National Archives

Questions

Question 6 (A): What are F.D.R.'s main criticisms of the actions of the Supreme Court regarding the New Deal?

Question 6 (B): What does F.D.R. propose to do to change the Supreme Court?

Question 6 (C): What are the two chief purposes of this proposal?

Question 6 (D): How would F.D.R. defend this proposal to critics who argue that he is "tipping the balance of power" between the three branches of government outlined in the U.S. Constitution

Document 7

"President Roosevelt has cleverly camouflaged a most amazing and startling proposal for packing the Supreme Court. It is true that the lower courts are slow and overburdened. We probably do need more judges to expedite litigation, but this condition should not be used as a subtle excuse for changing the complexion and undermining the independence of our highest court. Increasing the number of judges from nine to fifteen would not make this high tribunal act any more promptly than it does now, but it would give the President control of the Judiciary Department.

....Provision has been made for amending the Constitution. If it is necessary to change the Constitution, it should be done in the regular way.

This proposal should give every American grave concern for it is a step towards absolutism and complete dictatorial power."

Source: Letter sent by newspaper publisher, Frank Gannett to the Office of the Solicitor in the Justice Department, *National Archives*

Questions

Question 7 (A): According to newspaper publisher, Frank Gannett, what is Roosevelt's true motive for "judicial reform?"

Question 7 (B): What solution does Gannett offer to solve this problem?

Question 7 (C): What is the long-term concern that motivated Gannett to write this letter

Document 8



Source: *Washington Star*, June 2, 1935, <http://newdeal.feri.org/court/004.htm>

Questions

Question 8 (A): What is the criticism against F.D.R.'s plan that is suggested by this New Deal cartoon?

Question 8 (B): Name one aspect of F.D.R.'s New Deal program that could have led to this criticism.