**To what extent was the New Deal successful in achieving its aims**

**in the years 1933-1941? (25)**

The aims of Roosevelts New Deals were focused on what historians refer to as the “3 Rs”. Recovery of the economy to pre-Great Depression levels, reform of the financial system and the banks (to prevent another depression) and relief for the unemployed and the poor. In practical terms, this meant increasing employment, creating a support system for the poor, restoring confidence in the banks, giving aid to farmers and granting new and improved rights to workers.

The first part of the New Deal, done almost as soon as Roosevelt gained power, was to reform the banks. He declared a four-day holiday to stop people withdrawing their money and creating a run on the bank. In the March of 1933, Roosevelt’s Emergency Banking Act was passed, and it reorganised the banks, the way they were classified and closed the ones that couldn’t be supported. This act provided the much needed (temporary) stability, and, through fireside chats, Roosevelt convinced people not to withdraw their money from the banks. However, this act was not a long-term solution, and soon, the Glass-Steagall Act was passed, which banned mixing different types of banking and insurances. Together, these two acts were enough to provide the long-term stability the financial system needed to function. However, these regulations became controversial as banks complained they would lose customers if they couldn’t offer wide-range of financial services. Regardless of this, overall, the New Deal was successful in achieving its aim of restabilising the financial system, with some historians even saying that the New Deal re-established the integrity of the U.S. system.

Another aim of Roosevelt’s New Deal was to increase employment. To Roosevelt, unemployment was a major problem, and he wanted to tackle it as soon as he was in office. In May, 2 months after he took office, he signed the Tennessee Valley Authority Act into law, and created the TVA. The TVA created jobs by building dams along the Tennessee River, which created cheap electricity for people in the region, further encouraging economic growth, which led to further employment. In addition to the TVA, Roosevelt also created the Civilian Conservation Corps, which gave men jobs in national parks and forests, and provided 2.5 million jobs over the next 10 years. However, the CCC had major drawbacks. For one, women were denied these jobs, as it was not seen as appropriate women’s work. Furthermore, quotas limited black men to just 10% of the jobs, and they were also housed in segregated camps. Another agency created by Roosevelt is the Civil Works Administration, which was established in November of the year he took office. By January, it had created 4.3 million jobs. However, 7 million people were rejected to the program. Furthermore, the CWA was heavily criticised by big business, and FDR gave in to this pressure by making cuts, and by deciding against plans to make the CWA permanent. Within the year, the CWA had been cut and replaced by FERA, with its lower wages and strict eligibility criteria. Overall, while Roosevelt was able to decrease unemployment by about 12 million from 1933 to 1937, a lot of these measures were discriminatory and temporary, leading to a later depression in Roosevelt’s term. So, Roosevelt was successful in the short term, but failed to make any long-lasting impact relative to employment.

The New Deal also aimed to help the poor and workers, which began with the National Industrial Recovery Act, and it guaranteed that workers would have the right to collective bargaining for better wages and working conditions, and to unionise. However, it also suspended some antitrust laws, which meant that big business was once again able to create cartels and trusts to exploit the consumer. The Act also established the Public Works Administration, which was a large-scale public works construction agency headed by Harold Ickes. However, whether these things actually helped workers and the poor, and whether union laws were even enforced by the government is questionable. Businesses still employed vicious strike-breakers against any strikes and union-movements, and the PWA offered low wages and bad working conditions. Overall, while it looked like workers in general were being helped, the average workers life did not improve much under Roosevelt, and this was evident of the fact that the Great Depression continued. Unemployment persisted, the economy was still unstable, and farmers continued to struggle in the Dust Bowl. This led to Roosevelt’s second New Deal, a more aggressive series of federal programs.

In order to try and deal with the once again rising unemployment, Roosevelt created the Works Progress Administration to give jobs to the unemployed. They built schools, bridges and highways and decreased unemployment greatly in the short run. He further tried to give farmers subsidies (often leaving sharecroppers forgotten), and introduced the Social Securities Act, which guaranteed pensions to Americans, as well as setting up a system of unemployment benefits. However, large parts and aims of the New Deal were deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, who had already invalidated reforms like the NRA and the AAA. Roosevelt planned to pack the courts with Liberal judges so they could pass his plans, however this turned out to be unnecessary as the Supreme Court judges soon started to uphold New Deal projects.

These things would change the political and economic landscape of America for decades to come, regardless of how effective they were or how well they were enforced during Roosevelt’s time as president. Overall, despite the general quality of life under Roosevelt not becoming immensely better, the foundation was laid for greater employment, a stable financial system and economy, as well as better quality of life for the average person. Once America entered WW2 in 1941, it was prepared, both as a people (through work schemes) and economically, through banking reforms and social securities. Overall, on balance, while none of Roosevelt’s policies and initiatives were perfect, the New Deal managed to achieve its aims in the years after it ended – with employment soaring, workers unionised and a financial system stable enough to offer loans to half of Europe after the war.