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Course

Date

How the New Deal Redefined America's Understanding of Freedom

The word freedom took an obscure understanding, but not until President Roosevelt assumed office, enacting a series of liberty-oriented policies guised in the New Deal. Even though the initiative did not achieve holistically the initially intended objectives, ultimately, it gave Americans a new meaning of liberty. Joining the growing faction of thinkers who had sought real meaning of autonomy, the President strived to actualize the underpinnings of positive sovereignty, sanctioning ways that could ensure control of one's life as well as the fundamental purposes. Culminated in widespread social, economic, and political reforms, the New Deal ensured the government's presence in the lives of citizens in a new-found realm of freedom, albeit paradoxically.

Social freedom was rife for Roosevelt, and with the New Deal, he responded by enacting dozens of bills to streamline public works programs and steer federal mandate along with the pro-worker legislations. Given that the private sector was at that time on the verge of collapse, the administration embarked on channeling billions towards job creation and saving Americans from social misgivings. In the process, Foner asserts that the New Deal upgraded the nation's infrastructure, enacted labor laws that improved the lives of the workers (24). The idea of the New Deal was devising a permanent solution to the overarching unemployment problem, with the belief that it was inappropriate to deny the working class their livelihoods owing to a flopping social framework. The jobs created through many agencies in this newfound paradigm

aimed at restoring the recipient's self-respect and dignity in society. In the first place, the public works administration secured jobs for hundreds of thousands of workers coming in the form of heavy construction projects, and so, gave a new face to the country's falling infrastructure. The result of these efforts was not only the repair and upgrade of bridges, roads, and dams, but also the building of scores of libraries, schools, post offices, playgrounds, and hospitals for the expanding population. As Bell contends, with a special attention to the country's deposed youth population, the Civilian Consecration Corps got nearly 2.7 million young men to work, reclaiming the government-owned lands and forests by tree planting, soil enrichment, fire prevention, pest control among other conservation strategies (13). In this way, the men cared for their families through the wages they received. Moreover, thousands of actors, musicians, writers, and painters got the opportunity to earn a decent living from the artistic prowess, and empower the lives of other culturally deprived citizens. In the face of these developments, the New Deal created a novel social status since the citizens were no longer vulnerable to social oddities, such as the inability to afford basic human needs.

Economic freedom, on the other hand, was entrenched in the government's market regulation and the improved powers of the federal government to engage with the public welfare. At its fundamental echelon, the New Deal shook off the limitations of the classical economics, installing the federal government as the sole custodian of the industrial, agricultural, and business markets. To the policy's architects, the New Deal economics was not a top down revolution, but a rendition of the old-fashioned ideologies, a complete transformation of the social convictions at the central government. Commencing in 1932-1933, the programs were inherently recovery-oriented, including the shoring up of the American currency and credit coupled with expanding the policies of the then depression to averting and cushioning future

occurrences. According to Foner, this process signified the new move to progress encompassing manufacturing and farm production, affirming the government's commitment to attain countervailing power and the need to give the vulnerable members of the American society the ability to seek superior prospects in the marketplace (27). Some of the New Deal programs geared towards economic freedom included the Emergency Banking Act, which reengineered the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to buy bank stock while granting the Federal Reserve greater powers on currency. Prior this act, the President had collapsed the country's banks; therefore, Congress approved his decision in this new formulation. Meanwhile, the Banking Act of 1933 extended the mandate of the Federal Reserve, establishing the FDIC in the process. Because the FDIC had no hand in its formulation, it had opposed granting more powers to the Federal Reserve. The hallmark of such developments was the creation of the Glass Stegall Act that defined a new way of conducting retail banking. In a move to streamline the industrial sector, the New Deal caused the establishment of the National Industrial Recovery Act in 1933 that sought better industrial management. To deliver a realistic business environment, the Wagner Act devised the National Labor Relations Board, a platform where government and the business fraternity could negotiate the interest of the labor members without sabotage whatsoever. Amidst the devastating effects of the Great Depression, the economic freedom process aimed at providing a direct relief to the needy through structural reforms in a new affirmative commitment of a government to its citizens.

Political freedom prevailed in the fabric of political reforms that aimed at creating a level ground for the diverse races. The New Deal created a novel political realignment in which the Democratic Party commanded a majority following, with the entrenchment in liberal ideals and an umbrella for the newly empowered black minority. The New Deal spelled a considerable

improvement in the political exploits particularly for the African Americans, who previously were viewed as an inconsequential faction of the Republican Party, initially compromised through patronage. After all, an overwhelming black majority still hailed from the rural South, where they grappled with complete disfranchisement. Worse still, because the black vote in the north in cities such as New York, Chicago, and Pittsburgh, remained insignificant, most politicians had the view that it could not land anywhere but in the republican party because of the veto power among the democrats. Despite the government's silence on the political rights of the blacks, through the New Deal, the President made a decisive move that allowed African Americans to contest openly in the polls. For the first time in American history, just as significant, a noticeable number of black legislators began to comprise the federal government in what coined the Black Cabinet. Notably, Mrs. Bethune, one of the few liberals strived to ward off bigotry within the new deal initiatives, recording huge success. For instance, Mrs. Roosevelt became a public advocate championing for the equality of the African Americans, dealing in political symbolism instead of legislation (Kansas 8). Still, Mrs. Roosevelt's participation in the interracial southern conference for human welfare in 1938 connoted her defiance of the local Jim Crow laws that required that she does not sit among black people. Perhaps the greatest political influence of the New Deal on the blacks was escalating politicization of this group. In the course of engaging personally with the President and erasing a bone deep culture of unwarranted Republicanism, a considerable number of African Americans came to self-actualization, regarding themselves as worthy political players. For the first time, the blacks saw the viability of government politics and connecting with the major issues country, including the performance of members of the Black Cabinet ("Immigrant Incorporation" 315). In effect, the politicization by the New Deal brought a section of ex-Republicans known as Young Turks into the

democratic realm. Before long, political machines lived up to the escalating African American national outlook as loyal members of a major political party. As opposed to the earlier members of the black community, who depended on the already established political machines to forge their careers, this new group championed their political bases autonomously from the dominant party confines, exploiting community and familial relations even as they constantly clashed with the dominant players.

All in all, the New Deal, orchestrated for the prevalence of economic, social, and political stability, was a vital approach to America's tribulations of the 1930s even as some of the benefits were short-lived. Initially postulated as a conception volition that would give the country new sets of freedom, address liberal ideas, and struggles of the minority groups, this initiative was paramount. By wishing away the Communist groundwork that held no regard for liberties, the New Deal created several entities such as the Workers Progress Administration, which conspicuously overrun individualism, implementing government expansion while upholding the tribulations of the socially vulnerable groups. In the end, it helped create a temporary reprieve from the misgivings of this era, ingrained in the restoration of scores of freedoms.

Works Cited

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