

COMPARING PRIMARY SOURCES

On the New Deal

The New Deal affected the lives of nearly all Americans and almost everyone had an opinion about it. Read the following viewpoints about the New Deal. Then answer the questions that follow.

AGAINST THE NEW DEAL

Raymond Moley, one of Roosevelt's original Brain Trust, from Hard Times, by Studs Terkel

The first New Deal was a radical departure from American life. It put more power in the central Government. At the time, it was necessary, especially in the farm area of our economy. Left to itself, farming was in a state of anarchy. Beyond that, there was no need to reorganize in industry. We merely needed to get the farms prospering again and create a market for the industrial products in the cities.

The second New Deal was an entirely different thing. My disenchantment began then. Roosevelt didn't follow any particular policy after 1936. Our economy began to slide downhill—our unemployment increased—after that, until 1940. This is something liberals are not willing to recognize. It was the war that saved the economy and saved Roosevelt. . . .

[Roosevelt] began to bring in the radical elements, who up to that time had not been in support of him. Business went along with him in his early reforms, but after 1937, it began to be nervous about where he was going. He was improvising all the time. Hit or miss. . . .

In 1935, I took a firm stand. I said welfare is a narcotic, because it will never end. We'll have to stop this business and put people to work. The best way to put people to work is to encourage the development of industrial science. The Government can't put people to work.

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AGAINST THE NEW DEAL

1939 testimony by Sam T. Mayhew, an African American who voted Republican; collected in Such As Us (1978)

All the prosperity he has brought to the country has been legislated and is not real. Nothing he has ever started has been finished. My common way of expressing it is that we are in the middle of the ocean like a ship without an anchor. No good times can come to the country as long as there is so much discrimination practiced. . . .

Take me: I have applied for work at the welfare office, tried hard to get work. All they had for me, they said, came under the unskilled head. I tried one of these jobs—digging ditches for the sanitary department of the board of health. With my artificial limb, I simply couldn't compete with the other men who were digging ditches. . . .

Then I applied again for work, for something in the skilled labor line. I had seen men overseeing groups of workers, keeping their time, and so forth, and this I knew I could do as well as anybody. They told me that only white men had these jobs, that I would have to take something in the unskilled classification or none. . . . Because of my color, I must ditch or work on the road, in spite of my college training and in spite of physical handicaps from amputation and high blood pressure. . . .

I don't think that discrimination is intended at Washington, but here in this county the colored race has no chance to get a job when it's a choice between colors. I don't see much chance for our people to get anywhere when the color line instead of ability determines the opportunities to get ahead economically.

Adapted from *SUCH AS US*, edited by Tom E. Terrill and Jerrold Hirsch. Copyright © 1978 by The University of North Carolina Press.