the coming of new deal 1933 35 age roosevelt vol 2 arthur m schlesinger jr

The Coming of the New Deal 1933-35: Age of Roosevelt Vol 2 by Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. is a profound exploration of a pivotal period in American history, reflecting on the transformative policies of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the socio-economic challenges of the Great Depression. Schlesinger's work not only chronicles Roosevelt's ambitious agenda but also delves into the broader implications for American society, economy, and politics. This article aims to provide an overview of the key themes, contextual background, and lasting impact of the New Deal as articulated by Schlesinger in this influential volume.

Historical Context of the New Deal

The Great Depression's Impact

The New Deal emerged as a response to the dire economic circumstances that gripped the United States in the early 1930s. The Great Depression, which began with the stock market crash of 1929, resulted in:

1. Unprecedented Unemployment: By 1933, unemployment rates soared to nearly 25%, leaving millions without jobs or means of support.
2. Widespread Bank Failures: Thousands of banks failed, leading to the collapse of personal savings and eroding public trust in financial institutions.
3. Drought and Agricultural Decline: The Dust Bowl devastated farming communities across the Midwest, exacerbating food shortages and economic despair.

In this context, Schlesinger highlights the urgency for reform and the need for innovative government intervention to restore economic stability and public confidence.

The Political Climate

The political landscape during this time was characterized by a growing disillusionment with traditional political parties and their inability to address the economic crisis. Key factors included:

- The Role of Herbert Hoover: The incumbent president faced criticism for his laissez-faire approach, which many Americans believed failed to alleviate the suffering caused by the Depression.
- Rise of New Political Movements: Groups advocating for radical changes, such as the Socialists and Communists, began to gain traction, pushing for more aggressive government action.
- The 1932 Presidential Election: Franklin D. Roosevelt's election campaign centered on a promise of a "New Deal" for the American people, appealing to the electorate's desire for decisive action.

Franklin D. Roosevelt and His Vision

Roosevelt's Leadership Style

Schlesinger examines Roosevelt's charismatic leadership and his ability to connect with the American public. Key elements of his leadership style included:

- Effective Communication: Roosevelt utilized radio broadcasts, known as "fireside chats," to communicate directly with citizens, fostering a sense of trust and connection.
- Empathy and Optimism: His optimistic outlook and empathetic approach reassured a nation in despair, encouraging Americans to believe in recovery and change.

Key Policies of the New Deal

The New Deal consisted of a series of programs and reforms aimed at economic recovery and social reform. Schlesinger outlines several critical components, including:

1. The Emergency Banking Act (1933): Aimed to stabilize the banking system, it allowed for the reopening of solvent banks and restored public confidence.
2. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA): Provided direct relief for the unemployed, offering financial assistance to states for job creation and social welfare programs.
3. The Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA): Designed to boost agricultural prices by reducing surpluses, it paid farmers to cut back on production.
4. The National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA): Promoted industrial growth and fair labor standards, attempting to stimulate economic recovery through government intervention.
5. The Social Security Act (1935): Established a safety net for the elderly and unemployed, marking a significant shift in the role of the federal government in social welfare.

Critiques and Challenges of the New Deal

While the New Deal made significant strides, Schlesinger does not shy away from discussing the challenges and criticisms it faced. Key points of contention included:

Opposition from Various Sectors

- Conservative Critique: Many conservatives argued that the New Deal represented an overreach of federal power, fearing it could lead to socialism.
- Labor Unrest: While the New Deal aimed to support workers, tensions arose as labor movements sought greater rights and representation, leading to strikes and conflicts.
- Discontent from the Left: Some progressives and leftists felt that Roosevelt’s reforms were not radical enough to address the systemic inequalities exacerbated by the Depression.

Implementation Challenges

The execution of New Deal programs was often marred by bureaucratic inefficiencies and local resistance. Challenges included:

- Fragmentation of Efforts: Different agencies often operated in silos, leading to a lack of cohesive strategy and implementation.
- Resource Limitations: The sheer scale of the economic crisis meant that available resources were often insufficient to meet the demands of the programs.

The Legacy of the New Deal

Schlesinger argues that the New Deal fundamentally reshaped the American political landscape and established a new relationship between the government and its citizens. Key aspects of its legacy include:

Establishment of the Welfare State

The Social Security Act and other programs laid the groundwork for the modern welfare state, creating a framework for government responsibility in ensuring economic security for its citizens.

Political Realignment

The New Deal coalition brought together diverse groups, including labor unions, African Americans, and intellectuals, shifting the political landscape and establishing the Democratic Party as the dominant political force for decades.

Long-Term Economic Policy Changes

The policies introduced during the New Deal set a precedent for future government intervention in the economy, influencing responses to subsequent economic crises, including the 2008 financial crisis.

Conclusion

The Coming of the New Deal 1933-35: Age of Roosevelt Vol 2 by Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. is an essential read for anyone seeking to understand the complexities of American history during one of its most tumultuous periods. Through meticulous research and insightful analysis, Schlesinger captures the essence of Roosevelt’s vision and the transformative impact of the New Deal on American society. The challenges, critiques, and lasting changes initiated during this era continue to resonate in contemporary debates about the role of government in economic and social welfare,

making this work not only a historical account but also a relevant commentary on ongoing discussions in American political life.

Frequently Asked Questions

What was the primary objective of the New Deal initiated by Franklin D. Roosevelt?

The primary objective of the New Deal was to provide relief for the unemployed, recovery of the economy, and reform of the financial system to prevent a future depression.

How did Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. describe Roosevelt's leadership style in 'The Coming of the New Deal'?

Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. described Roosevelt's leadership style as pragmatic and adaptable, emphasizing his ability to rally public support and navigate complex political landscapes.

What were some key programs introduced during the New Deal?

Key programs included the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA), and the Social Security Act, among others.

In what ways did the New Deal change the role of the federal government?

The New Deal significantly expanded the role of the federal government in economic and social affairs, leading to increased regulation and the establishment of various welfare programs.

What criticism did the New Deal face according to Schlesinger's analysis?

Schlesinger noted that the New Deal faced criticism for being too radical from conservatives and not sufficiently addressing the needs of the poor from more progressive factions.

How did Schlesinger portray the relationship between Roosevelt and the American public?

Schlesinger portrayed it as a mutually supportive relationship, where Roosevelt's charismatic leadership inspired hope and trust among the American people during a time of crisis.

What impact did the New Deal have on labor rights?

The New Deal had a significant impact on labor rights, including the establishment of the National

Labor Relations Act, which protected workers' rights to unionize and engage in collective bargaining.

How did Schlesinger's work contribute to our understanding of the New Deal's legacy?

Schlesinger's work provides a comprehensive historical analysis that highlights both the successes and limitations of the New Deal, shaping our understanding of its long-term effects on American society and governance.

What role did women play in the New Deal, according to Schlesinger?

According to Schlesinger, women played a crucial role in the New Deal, both as leaders in various programs and as beneficiaries of social reforms, although they often faced discrimination and were underrepresented in leadership positions.

What was the significance of the 'First Hundred Days' of the New Deal?

The 'First Hundred Days' of the New Deal were significant because they marked an unprecedented burst of legislation aimed at addressing the economic crisis, setting the tone for Roosevelt's administration and establishing a framework for future reforms.

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