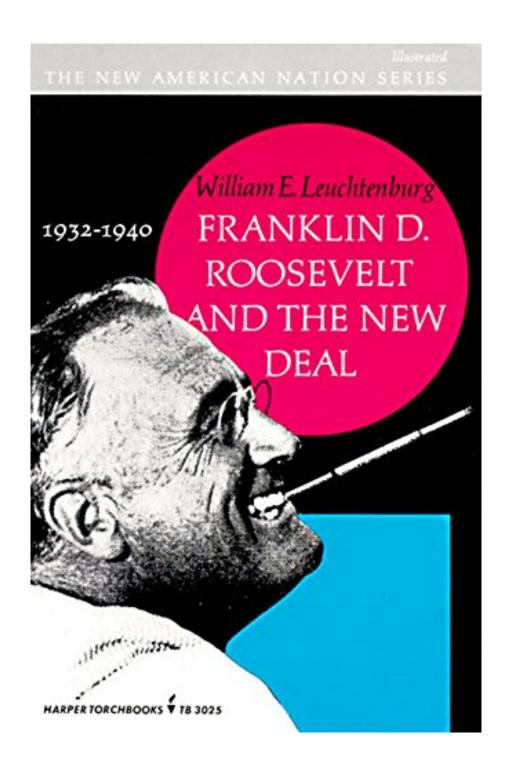


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When the stability of American life was threatened by the Great Depression, the decisive and visionary policy contained in FDR's New Deal offered America a way forward. In this groundbreaking work, William E. Leuchtenburg traces the evolution of what was both the most controversial and effective socioeconomic initiative ever undertaken in the United Statesâ€"and explains how the social fabric of American life was forever altered. It offers illuminating lessons on the challenges of economic transformationâ€"for our time and for all time.

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Wonderful Intro to FDR & The New Deal

By R. Schwartz

I have very much enjoyed this book. It appears very objective - relatively speaking - and describes both the benefits and failures of the New Deal Economic policies and social advancement. It acknowledges the second crash of 1937 and the many problems incurred. And yet it does not deny the social progress that has helped millions of voices that were otherwise previously unheard in the political arena of American life.

The book takes on FDR and the New Deal Administration's efforts and set backs. It does however fail in the reasons of economics, the deeper structural reasons as to why many of the New Deal measures failed. The books does write of the Gold buying, the TVA, the higher taxes, the farm subsidies, relief efforts, the 100's of Acts, the Supreme Court decisions, the internal affairs and problems. What I especially enjoyed was the descriptions and political views of many of the other running mates as in Father Coughlin - a Yahoo, Huey Long and "Share the Wealth," Upton Sinclair, Merman, Wilkes - others and the political climate of socialism through out the country.

Immediately after reading this book, I began reading another book called "FDR's Folly," by Jim Powell, which is an anti-New Deal account with detailed analysis pertaining to the economic policies and their failures, written from a lazzaire-faire, Free Market, and Libertarian viewpoint - a bias account which supports the old two-class capitalism, and yet is also an excellent book. A good pro-New Deal on Social Security is Joe Cnason's "The Raw Deal." I recommend reading these books, as this one by William E. Leuchtenburg is more detailed in the social advancements as Powell's is more detailed on economics.

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

The New Deal Starter Book

By Amergin

In just 350 pages, Leuchtenburg somehow manages to tell the story of the New Deal. That he was able do this in such an entertaining and informative way should be studied by future authors of history of all sorts. There are many New Deal books, and several are well written (I like Kennedy and Schlesinger), but you won't get the maximum benefit out of them without previous reading - this is the place to start!

17 of 22 people found the following review helpful.

Setting the Record Straight about FDR

By Dana Garrett

As the USA contemplates taking on an \$800 billion stimulus package to jump start its moribund economy, many are asking if there has ever been a comparable investment that has triggered a recovery. The usual answer is Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal" and how it wrested the USA from the Great Depression.

But some, mostly conservative, revisionist scholarship has questioned that answer. This scholarship points to the recession of 1937 as evidence that the New Deal spurred little or no recovery at all. These scholars further claim it was the onset of War World 2 with all its attendant war manufacturing that wrested the

USA's economy from the throes of the Great Depression, apparently oblivious to the irony that the rearmament campaign was a massive government spending spree.

Fortunately, we have William E. Leuchtenburg's Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal: 1932-1940 to set us straight. Reading Leuchtenburg's work, it's clear that the revisionists use quite selective evidence. They are especially suspect for what they don't tell us. For example, by 1936 the New Deal had

- * created at least 6 million jobs
- * increased the national income by half in 1936 from what it was in 1933
- * doubled industrial output
- * spurred Detroit to manufacture more cars than any year since 1929
- * energized utility companies to sell more electricity than any time in the past
- * quadrupled the net income of farm operators
- * caused corporation profit sheets, which ran a \$2 billion deficit in 1933, to run ran \$5 billion in the black (p. 194)

To be sure, there was a recession in 1937, but it was not because of the New Deal policies. Rather, it was precisely because they were being abandoned:

"The more successful the New Deal was, the more it undid itself. The more prosperous the country became, the more the people returned to the only values they knew, those associated with an individualistic, success-oriented society. ... During the upturn of 1935 - 37, conservative argued that, since the crisis had passed, reforms were no longer appropriate. When the recession struck, this plea had even greater force; as the nerve of business opposition revived, the old convictions that business could run the economy with greater efficiency than bureaucrats reappeared." (p.273)

Roosevelt took a more moderate line during the recession, partly because of the intransigence of Congress. Consequently, the economy didn't recover until the massive government spending that occurred during the run up and onset of the second world war. Even so there is a lesson in the recovery that the conservative revisionists would never want to admit:

"Although it was the war that freed the government from the taboos of a balanced budget and revealed the potentialities of spending, it is conceivable that New Deal measures would have led the country into a new cycle of prosperity even if there had been no war. Marked gains had been made before the war spending had any appreciable effect. When recovery did come, it was much more soundly based because of the adoption of the New Deal program." (p.347)

Both the New Deal spending and the rearmament spending were budget busting stimulus programs. In terms of the impact they had on the economy, they both had the same effect: viz., they spurred a recovery. And both effectively questioned and refuted the conservative assumptions that balanced budgets and a private sector largely free from the targeted economic stimuli of the public sector are the sine qua non of a recovering economy.

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