

## THE RISE OF SOCIALISM IN POLITICS IN THE USA, Part V

In the wake of the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and its aftermath, socialism rose to a greater crescendo in the USA during the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Outgoing President Herbert Hoover said that the 1932 election was not only a choice of two candidates but also one of two philosophies of government. During Roosevelt's First Hundred Days, March 9 – June 16, 1932, a series of fifteen bills and seventy-six laws were passed in which the federal government gained control of many areas of our economy— banking, agriculture, rules for organized labor, creating new jobs, etc. Roosevelt asked the Congress for “broad executive power to wage a war against this emergency” in his effort to pull our country out of the Great Depression.

Shortly after his election In his first “Fireside Chat”, the President had convinced many of the American people to return the money from their mattresses back into banks again. This talk had saved the banking system. On July 24 in another radio “Fireside Chat”, Roosevelt, now a paternal and savior-like figure to many, explained to his listeners about “the hundred days, which have been devoted to the starting of the wheels of the New Deal,” the name he called his recovery plan for the nation. His ideas for his “New Deal” seemed to have been largely formed by consultation with former colleagues and “the Brain Trust”—a group of Columbia University professors and others. Many of these advisors had identified with Fabian socialist ideas in the past, and now it appeared, had an opportunity to actualize some of their beliefs through the President. Stuart, Chase, an MIT professor and another of the “Brain Trust” members, wrote the book, “The New Deal”, containing even more radical concepts than were actualized in the real “New Deal”.

Was there pushback to this shift to collectivism, when an intellectual elite decides what is best for our country rather than the individual/ “government by the people” making the decisions? Yes! The greatest opposition came from the Supreme Court. A majority, five out of the nine members of the Court, had vetoed some of the “New Deal” legislation, the NRA, National Recovery Act, and the AAA, the Agricultural Adjustment Act, as unconstitutional. In 1935 Roosevelt initiated a second burst of laws introducing the welfare state to the nation, including the Social Security Act, legislating old-age pensions and unemployment insurance. After his landslide victory in the 1936 election, Roosevelt responded and tried to pack the Court by introducing a law to Congress in which he would be empowered to appoint an additional judge for any member of the Court over 70 who did not retire because of his “case overload”. This overreach backfired, as the American people held the Supreme Court sacrosanct. Also “a switch in time that saved nine” occurred when one of the five justices who has been in opposition to “New Deal ‘ legislation changed his position, and the Social Security Act and other laws were not vetoed by the Court as before.

The American Communist Party, CPUSA, birthed out of the Socialist Party of America in 1919, at first viewed FDR negatively as a fascist like Hitler. Influenced by changes in foreign policy in the COMINTERN, the international arm of the Communist Party guided by Stalin, the premiere of Russia (1929-1953), Roosevelt became a hero overnight. In the 1936 election Roosevelt was charged with being a communist. He denied this “red herring”, as he called these accusations. He was a pragmatist, trying new ideas and seeing if they worked or not, but he was not a communist!

President Roosevelt has been credited for decades with saving the nation and getting us out of the Great Depression. Other historical analysts claim our involvement in World War II brought us out of the Depression. In the next section in this series about “The Rise of Socialism in Politics in the USA”, we will explore our entrance into World War II and the charges that some communists had infiltrated the large government bureaucracy created by President Roosevelt and leaked our secrets to Soviet Russia. Our freedoms were under assault, as they are today, as forces within and without our country battle for the heart and soul of the United States of America.

Susan McCrea, SRWF Americanism Committee Chair