

Why did Roosevelt win the 1932 election?



Podcast

Impact of the Crash and the depression - blamed on the Republicans and the Hoover administration.

- Industrial production fell by 45%
- Construction by 92%
- Unemployment rose to 25% (1 in 4)
- Financial crisis - 5,000 bank failures
- Crisis in agriculture.

Criticisms of Hoover

Empty promises - in 1928 election Hoover had promised Americans 'a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage' and claimed the US were close to eradicating poverty.

Insufficient action

- Retained belief in non interference of federal government and that it was charity that would provide any relief to those who needed it (not government - 'prosperity was just around the corner' (He didn't recognize the depth of the crisis)
- He took some measures, but criticized for being 'too little too late'.
- e.g. Farming: Smoot- Hawley Tariff (to protect agriculture from imports) - Prices stayed low, incomes fell, evictions increased, crops rotted (not worth harvesting - homeless (hobos) travelled cross country in search of casual work. (In Hoover we trusted, Noel we are busted' - popular anti Hoover slogan capturing sense of 'anger'.
- Spent \$4 billion on public works schemes (e.g Hoover Dam)
- Offered \$150 million in federal relief to helps state governments- but not until 1932

The depression became synonymous with Hoover: Shanty towns were called 'Hoovervilles', but there was also 'Hoover leather' (cardboard soles for shoes) and 'Hoover blankets' (newspapers)



Roosevelt's 'clever' Campaign

In 1932 Americans faced a stark choice. They could vote to keep "the old order" in the White House, or they could choose Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal for the American people."

FDR promised "bold, persistent experimentation" to unlock the paralyzed American economy and alleviate the people's fear and suffering. Hoover's policies of "Destruction, Delay, Despair and Doubt," he insisted, were no way to run the nation.

Energy - he launched a national whistle-stop campaign, crisscrossing the nation, and delivered sixteen major speeches, each tied to a specific policy issue. By election night, FDR had traveled roughly fifteen thousand miles.

Even had a campaign song: "Happy Days Are Here Again."
(Follow link, listen to the lyrics - sense the optimism)

His KEY message which may have won over many was his pledge to use the extensive powers of the federal government to give Americans a 'New Deal' (Plus he would repeal prohibition- a real vote winner!)



"Scuse me, Baddy, is this the bread-line or a run on a bank?"

The outcomes

Roosevelt won 46/48 states in a landslide victory - he won nearly 60% of the popular vote. (But note - 2/3rds of black voters voted for Hoover).

Is 'history' being too harsh on Hoover?

There were successes:

- The Hoover Dam, Empire State Building (constructed in just over a year in 1931) The construction of San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge was begun in 1932.
- Aviation industry and cinema continued to do well.
- PLUS - the obvious point that Roosevelt didn't offer any specific solutions in his election campaign- just broad promises of improvement- and his New Deal was basically an extension on Hoover's schemes.