

By Rep. Steve King

As a junior at Denison High School, I wrote a term paper on President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal. I began working on the paper with the intention of confirming what I had been taught in school - that FDR's government recovery programs brought America out of the Great Depression.

I started my research believing in the success of Roosevelt's economic-recovery programs. To support this claim, I spent hours at the Carnegie Library in Denison reading past editions of the local, biweekly newspaper.

My reading began with the 1929 stock-market crash, and I examined every issue through the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. Those stacks of old papers turned upside down everything I had been taught in history and government class about the New Deal. As I searched for information proving the New Deal stabilized the American economy, I instead found the exact opposite: high unemployment, a struggling stock market and continued hard times.

Later statistical findings confirm my 11th-grade research. Throughout the 1930s, the unemployment rate never dipped below 14 percent. FDR's tinkering with the free market frustrated investors, and the 1929 high point for the Dow Jones industrial average was not reached again until 1954.

Roosevelt possessed tremendous leadership skills and inspired many Americans, including my hard-hit family. Charisma aside, historians often inflate the true economic record of the New Deal. Roosevelt tried one big government program after another, with poor results. Many of Roosevelt's programs and initiatives led the government to compete directly with the private sector for capital and workers, with Washington making the rules.

Massive government spending did not lift the United States out of recession. Instead, FDR's big-government programs prolonged the Great Depression. The best we can say about the New Deal is that it may have blunted the depths of the Depression, but the trade-off was it delayed economic recovery until World War II and our post-war industrial advantage brought America out of the Depression.

Growing government as a means to stimulate the economy delays recovery. The private sector should bring economic solutions, not government.

This week Congress has been debating President Barack Obama's "new" New Deal, a massive grab-bag of taxpayer-funded subsidies, pet projects and more bureaucracy. In a meeting with House Republicans last month, Obama stated his belief that FDR's New Deal did not go far enough and did not spend enough money.

Should the current spending package pass Congress, it, combined with other recent government bailouts, commitments and spending to address our financial crisis would total around \$9.7 trillion. Bloomberg.com reports this is enough money to pay off more than 90 percent of Americans' home mortgages.

As Congress debates this monstrosity, working families across Iowa continue to feel the pain of these tough times. From blue- to white-collar employees, from farmers to small-business owners, everyone is affected. Congress should take action, but it must be the right kind of action. Our economy will not recover because people spend more; it will recover because people produce more.

Instead of more wasteful special-interest spending, tax relief for taxpaying families and small businesses will create new jobs and increase family incomes. A suspension of capital-gains taxes will give job creators new incentives to innovate, grow and expand.

Just as with the New Deal, Obama's plan will only ensure our grandchildren inherit a country further in debt and less able to grow out of a crisis. As the old saying goes, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

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