Power Under Pressure

Debating federal power and the future of the New Deal

USH.C.4.3.C "Analyze the controversies arising from New Deal economic policies, including charges of socialism and the effect of President Roosevelt's court packing plan on the future of the New Deal."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one charge against the New Deal and a reply to it. Then number Roosevelt's Court proposal 1, the reaction to it 2, and its effect on his political support 3.

A Fight Over the New Deal

1. In 1935, a worker opening a paycheck might see money set aside for Social Security, a New Deal program meant to support people in old age. President Franklin D. Roosevelt also backed jobs programs and rules for banks during the Great Depression. Critics called this growing federal role "socialism," warning that government might take too much control of the economy. Supporters answered that the programs offered security while most businesses stayed privately owned. The argument was about how far federal power should reach.

2. The Supreme Court posed another challenge. It struck down key New Deal laws, including the National Industrial Recovery Act in 1935 and a major farm program under the Agricultural Adjustment Act in 1936. The justices ruled that these measures exceeded federal power. To Roosevelt, such decisions threatened further recovery efforts; to opponents, they protected constitutional limits. Both sides could claim they were defending the country, but they disagreed about whether a national crisis justified a larger federal role.

3. In 1937, Roosevelt proposed adding up to six Supreme Court justices if older justices remained on the bench. He said the plan would help the Court handle its workload, but critics called it "court packing," an attempt to gain favorable rulings. Even some New Deal allies objected, fearing for judicial independence. Congress rejected the plan. The Court upheld several New Deal measures that year, so important programs survived, but the fight weakened Roosevelt's political support for pushing new policies.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did critics call the New Deal "socialism," and what fact weakens that charge?

2. How did Roosevelt and his opponents interpret the Court's rulings differently?

3. Why did some New Deal allies oppose Roosevelt's Court plan?

4. How did the Court fight leave the New Deal with both a gain and a setback?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a brief newspaper editorial from 1937 taking a position on Roosevelt's Court plan. Use the socialism debate and the Court's rulings as evidence, and explain one possible effect on the New Deal's future.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one charge against the New Deal and a reply to it. Then number Roosevelt's Court proposal 1, the reaction to it 2, and its effect on his political support 3. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did critics call the New Deal "socialism," and what fact weakens that charge?	**Critics feared growing federal control of the economy, but most businesses remained privately owned.**
2	How did Roosevelt and his opponents interpret the Court's rulings differently?	**Roosevelt saw a threat to recovery efforts; opponents saw protection for constitutional limits.**
3	Why did some New Deal allies oppose Roosevelt's Court plan?	**They feared that adding justices to gain favorable rulings would undermine judicial independence.**
4	How did the Court fight leave the New Deal with both a gain and a setback?	**The Court upheld several New Deal measures, but the fight weakened Roosevelt's political support for new policies.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Roosevelt should not add justices to the Court. Some critics call his programs socialism because federal power has grown, although most businesses remain privately owned. The Court struck down major recovery laws, so I understand why he wants a friendlier Court. Still, changing its size to win rulings could weaken judicial independence. Congress should reject the plan, even if that makes it harder for Roosevelt to pass new policies.

Accept either position on the Court plan if the editorial uses both requested debates accurately and explains a plausible effect on future New Deal policies. Do not require students to claim that Roosevelt's proposal caused the Court to uphold later measures.