

TEACHER GUIDE

1936 DOC. #3: “An Attack on the New Deal” Cartoon

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Not everyone thought that the New Deal was a good thing for the United States. Wealthy Republican critics formed the American Liberty League that claimed the New Deal’s programs were “dictatorial.” They argued that these new programs designed to help poor families support themselves would undermine the free enterprise system. Communists and socialists also criticized the New Deal for not challenging the capitalist structure and for ignoring the specific needs of African Americans.

> **Project** the document.

This cartoon entitled “An Attack on the New Deal” by cartoonist William Gropper appeared in *Vanity Fair* magazine in 1935. It used an image from Jonathan’s Swift’s famous satire, *Gulliver’s Travels*, in which the giant, Gulliver, is restrained by the tiny people of Lilliput.

QUESTION **Who is represented in this cartoon?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER In Swift’s satire the giant, Gulliver, was restrained by the tiny people of Lilliput. In this cartoon, Uncle Sam (the United States), is being restrained by the bureaucrats, laws, and agencies the New Deal.

EVIDENCE the letters on the bonds holding Uncle Sam represent the many “Alpahabet Agencies” of the New Deal

SEE NOTE →

QUESTION **What is the cartoonist’s perspective on the New Deal? How can you tell?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER He opposes the New Deal.

EVIDENCE Uncle Sam is being held captive by the New Deal agencies

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PowerPoint Slide

NOTE

Some of these New Deal agencies on the bonds are:

- TVA: Tennessee Valley Authority
- NRA: National Recovery Administration
- PWA: Public Works Administration
- AAA: Agricultural Adjustment Administration
- CCC: Civilian Conservation Authority
- FCA: Farm Credit Administration
- HOLC: Home Owners Loan Corporation
- FDIC: Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation

SEE NOTE →

QUESTION	Whose perspective is being portrayed? Give evidence to support your answer.
SUGGESTED ANSWER	The cartoon gives the perspective of Republican critics who felt that the New Deal was hampering free enterprise.
EVIDENCE	the cords tying Uncle Sam represent the restraint on capitalism that Republicans resented
QUESTION	Is this a positive, message-based cartoon or a negative, attack-based cartoon? Why is this your conclusion?
SUGGESTED ANSWER	This cartoon is negative and attack-based.
EVIDENCE	Uncle Sam is frowning and being held down against his will; Lilliputians are shooting arrows and trampling his body; the cartoon does not offer a view of what is good to do, but rather is attacking what is bad

FURTHER QUESTIONS

- Can government programs hurt free enterprise? Justify your answer.
- What New Deal agencies and programs are still in existence?
- Compare the style of this cartoonist with the previous one. Which one do you think is most effective in conveying his opinion and why?

NOTE

An article accompanying the cartoon said, "Here is a giant if there ever was one, the most powerful nation the world has ever seen. It has the makings of good times, (but) it does not make them. Why? Because the Lilliputians of the New Deal will not let it. These busy little folk cannot bear the thought of letting the great giant, America, escape" (A. Brinkley, *American History* 709).

ADDITIONAL INFO

The Republicans ran on the platform that the United States was in danger of having the "American way" stolen by radical Democrats who would lead the country to class conflict and economic collapse. Neither these criticisms from the Right nor those from the Left ever gained popular support. Roosevelt's policies were approved of by most people and helped to secure his place as the President who rescued the United States from the Great Depression.

The cartoonist William Gropper was part of the Ashcan Group of Social Realist painters. He was a Socialist who often criticized Roosevelt for abuse of presidential power. In 1935, one of his *Vanity Fair* cartoons caused a major diplomatic incident when the magazine was banned in Japan. The cartoon in question showed Emperor Hirohito of Japan in military uniform hauling the Nobel Peace Prize behind him as though dragging a coffin. In this period, six years before Pearl Harbor, the Japanese were able to successfully pressure some U.S. businesses to withdraw their advertising from *Vanity Fair*.

CONNECTIONS

(see thematic listing)

- Cartoons**
- Class/Labor**
- Economics**