

Surveying the Past

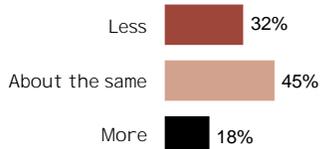
FDR's Power Play

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt assumed the office of president in March 1933, the United States was ravaged by the effects of the Great Depression. Some 13 to 15 million Americans were unemployed, with millions of them roaming the country in search of work, and banks were closed in 38 states.

To deal with the crisis, Roosevelt initiated the most sweeping legislative program ever enacted in peacetime. His strong leadership was welcomed for the most part by a desperate nation; but, perhaps inevitably, it also aroused questions throughout his first two terms in office of whether the president was overstepping his constitutional bounds.

Question:

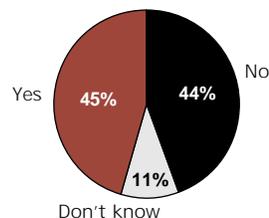
Do you think the president of the United States should have more power or less power than he now has?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, July 21-26, 1937

Question:

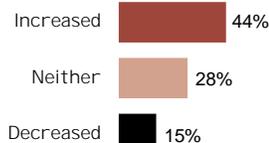
Do you think President Roosevelt has concentrated too much power in his own hands?



Source: Survey by Roper/*Fortune*, May 1938.

Question:

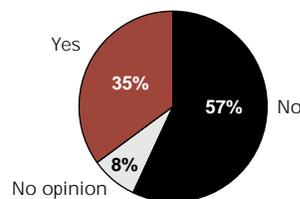
Do you think that the possibility of a dictatorship in this country has been increased or decreased by Roosevelt's policies?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, August 18-23, 1938.

Question:

Do you believe the policies and acts of the Roosevelt administration may lead to dictatorship?

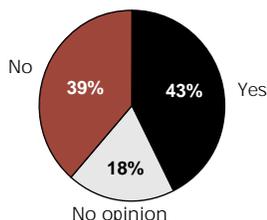


Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, April 8-13, 1938.

Remodeling His Cabinet

Question:

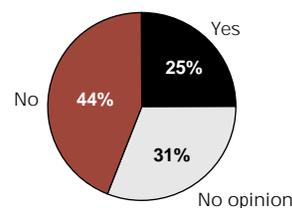
Should Congress give the president power to enlarge the Cabinet and reorganize government offices which would be under his supervision?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, January 20-25, 1937.

Question:

Do you think such a change is in line with the powers the founders of the Constitution meant the president to have?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, January 20-25, 1937.

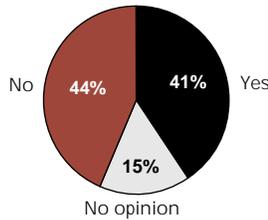
Order in the Court

Misjudged Mandate

After carrying 46 states and scoring a tremendous victory over Governor Alf Landon in the 1936 election, Roosevelt felt he had a sufficient mandate to take on the Supreme Court, which had ruled some of his "New Deal" legislation unconstitutional. Declaring in a March 9, 1937, radio speech that his plan would "provide a reinvigorated, liberal-minded judiciary necessary to furnish quicker and cheaper justice," Roosevelt proposed to add up to six new justices to the Supreme Court. Accused of trying to "pack" the Court and undermine the separation of powers, the president provoked substantial opposition from the people and badly damaged his standing in Congress, which proved largely uncooperative for the remainder of his dazzlingly won second term.

Question:

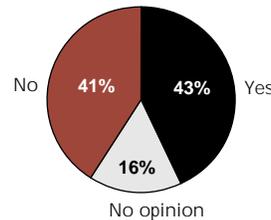
Do you favor President Roosevelt's plan to increase the size of the Supreme Court to make it liberal?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, February 10-15, 1937.

Question:

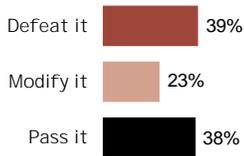
Do you think a majority of the nation's voters approve of Roosevelt's plan?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, March 3-8, 1937.

Question:

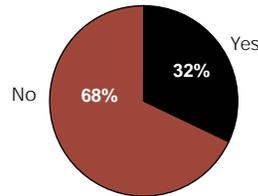
What action should Congress take on the Roosevelt plan to reorganize the Supreme Court—pass it, modify it, or defeat it?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, February 24-March 1, 1937.

Question:

Would you like to have President Roosevelt continue his fight to enlarge the Supreme Court?

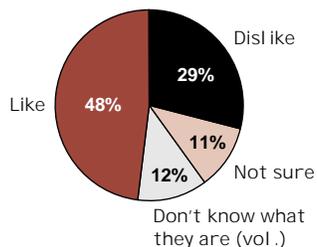


Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, August 25-30, 1937.

Methods in Question

Question:

On the whole do you like or dislike [President Roosevelt's] general economic objectives?



Source: Survey by Roper/Fortune, May 1938.

Question:

On the whole do you like or dislike the methods by which he seeks to achieve them?

