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The Massachusetts Clergy and the New Deal

Monroe Billington and Cal Clark*

When Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated President on March 4, 1933 the United States was in the deepest economic depression in its history, a crisis which brought the economic and political systems to the edge of breakdown and threatened social chaos.¹ Under such conditions, at the new President's suggestion, the Congress passed literally dozens of major bills to attack the problems of the Great Depression. Stupendous sums of money were appropriated. A vast bureaucracy developed to administer the multiplicity of agencies and programs. A flurry of activity occurred as the "New Deal for the forgotten man" was inaugurated and implemented. How effective were these early New Deal measures? How were Americans responding to them? What else could the government do to help? Surrounded by a massive bureaucracy and cut off from the average American, President Roosevelt desired answers to these questions. Also, since he planned to run for reelection in 1936, Roosevelt believed it would be politically advantageous to touch base with the grass roots.

As one such overture, on September 23 and 24, 1935, the President mailed a form letter to the members of the clergy in the United States. He assumed that the clergymen, because of their positions and contact with people in their communities, were in an unusual position to understand conditions and problems in their respective communities. Therefore, FDR requested the clergymen to write to him about conditions in their communities and to tell him how the Government could better serve the people of the nation:²

Your high calling brings you into intimate daily contact not only with your own parishioners, but with people generally in your community. I am sure you see the problems of your people with wise and sympathetic understanding.

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Because of the grave responsibilities of my office, I am turning to representative clergymen for counsel and advice, feeling confident that no group can give more accurate or unbiased views.

I am particularly anxious that the new social security legislation just enacted, for which we have worked so long, providing for old-age pensions, aid for crippled children and unemployment insurance, shall be carried out in keeping with the high purposes with which this law was enacted. It is also vitally important that the works program shall be administered to provide employment at useful work, and that our unemployed as well as the Nation as a whole may derive the greatest possible benefits.

I shall deem it a favor if you will write me about conditions in your community. Tell me where you feel our Government can better serve our people. We can solve our many problems, but no one man or single group can do it. We shall have to work together for the common end of better spiritual and material conditions for the American people.

May I have your counsel and your help? I am leaving on a short vacation but will be back in Washington in a few weeks and I will deeply appreciate your writing to me.

The number of clergymen in the United States in 1935 was about 200,000. The President's letter was mailed to 121,700 of the nation's clergymen, apparently to every minister, priest, and rabbi whose address was available. Slightly more than 100,000 letters reached the addresses, and about 30,000 clergymen responded to the President's letter. In addition to commenting upon conditions, many respondents expressed their opinions toward Roosevelt and the New Deal programs, legislation, and philosophy.³

A careful analysis of these letters should produce a good picture of the general public's attitudes toward the New Deal two-and-one-half years after its inception. Letters were received from clergymen from all the major religious denominations in the United States; thus, the various socio-economic, ethnic, and regional interests should receive representation from the clergy. The deep involvement of clergymen in the day-to-day lives of their parishioners should have made them more cognizant of public opinion about and reaction to the governmental attempts to respond to myriad socio-economic problems brought on by the Great Depression. The clergymen's viewpoints would be expected to depart from general public opinion in certain respects, however. They should be much more sensitive to moral issues and might also be somewhat more politically conservative, although such conservatism might be manifested by disparate attitudes. On the one hand, there might be opposition to political innovation and governmental "socialism," while another variant of conservatism consists of "support for the existing regime" — in this case Roosevelt and the New Deal.

To permit a detailed analysis of each letter, we confined our study to a single state — Massachusetts. Like other states, Massachusetts had been hit hard by the negative economic forces of the Great Depression. What happened to

cotton textiles — the state's leading industry — was indicative of a badly lagging economy. In 1928, a total of 113,000 Massachusetts cotton textile workers in urban centers such as Fall River, Lowell, and New Bedford earned wages of \$115,000,000 while producing goods valued at \$416,000,000. By contrast, in 1935, only 36,000 workers were employed and they earned only \$25,000,000, while producing goods valued at less than \$80,000,000.⁴ The story was much the same for New England's boot and shoe manufacturing industry, centered in Massachusetts. In 1929 the annual gross dollar volume of this traditional industry was \$958,689,737, but in 1935 that figure dropped to an estimated \$352,000,000.⁵ Codfish processing plants in Gloucester reported comparable declines, and the figures were no better for the manufacturing plants of Springfield, Worcester, and Pittsfield. In February 1935, the second largest print works in the United States shut down in Fall River.⁶ The state's agricultural regions were equally depressed. Dairy farmers and poultry and egg producers found few markets for their products. Growers of hay, fresh vegetables, and fruits, including strawberries, cranberries, tomatoes, corn, and potatoes, likewise suffered.⁷

The Massachusetts clergy file in the Roosevelt Library contains 363 letters varying in length from single-sentence responses to one of twenty-four typewritten pages. The contents of the letters were analyzed in terms of the political issues they cited and of their overall evaluation of the Roosevelt administration. Each letter was read and coded as to its general tone toward Roosevelt and the New Deal: (1) highly critical, (2) critical, (3) favorable, (4) highly favorable. The same four-point scale was used for the special subjects mentioned by the ministers.

Table 1 indicates how well the clergy who returned letters to FDR represented the Massachusetts population by comparing them to the general population in terms of religion and place of residence.

TABLE I
Comparison of Clergy Sample and Massachusetts Population

	Place of Residence*		Religion		
	Among Population	Among Clergy	Among Population	Among Clergy	
Rural	6%	18%	Catholic	65%	8%
Medium Town	41%	36%	Jewish	10%	1%
Large City	53%	46%	Congregationalist	6%	22%
			Episcopalian	5%	13%
			Baptist	4%	11%
			Methodist	3%	10%
			Unitarian	2%	7%
			Other	5%	4%
			Unknown		25%

*Rural communities were those with populations under 2,500; medium towns had populations between 2,500 and 50,000; and large cities had populations over 50,000.

Sources for Massachusetts population: For residence, United States Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930*. Vol. 1. *Population*. (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931), pp. 497-501. For religion, *United States Bureau of Census, Religious Bodies: 1936*. Vol. 1. *Summary and Detailed Tables*. (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1941), pp. 766-67.

The clergy in our sample were slightly more likely to come from rural regions than the Massachusetts citizenry as a whole, but the major distortion concerns the distribution of religious affiliations. A great underrepresentation of Catholics and Jews among those responding to the President is immediately obvious. Even if the one-quarter of the ministers whose religion could not be ascertained from internal evidence were all Catholics and Jews, substantial Protestant overrepresentation would still exist; and this is especially striking since Catholics constituted 65 percent of the Massachusetts faithful. Since these two religions, as well as the more urban population, would generally be expected to be the most supportive of the New Deal, this "sampling bias" of responses, much greater than variations in congregation size could account for, almost certainly understates FDR's popularity among the Massachusetts clergy.

In regard to the general evaluation of the Administration, Table 2 shows that the Massachusetts clergy expressed support for FDR and the New Deal by an approximately 2-to-1 ratio, far greater than Roosevelt's relatively narrow 1932 and 1936 electoral margins in the state.⁸ In comparison to the rest of the nation, though, these letters appear slightly more critical than average. From a sample of 12,096 clergy responses, Aubrey C. Mills of the Department of

TABLE 2

General Attitude of Clergymen Toward FDR	
Very Favorable	24%
Favorable	43%
Critical	19%
Very critical	14%

Commerce calculated that 48.5 percent were totally favorable toward the New Deal, 35 percent were favorable with specific criticisms, and only 16.5 percent were generally critical.⁹

Several political and socio-economic forces might be at work here, although unfortunately our data cannot be used to untangle their specific effects. In terms of the overwhelmingly laudatory state-wide distribution of attitudes, supporters of the President could well have been more disposed to answer his letter; the clergy should have been especially sensitive to the personal

dimensions of the social and economic problems at which the New Deal programs were aimed; and the letters may well have reflected a clerical conservatism of "regime support." The slightly lower enthusiasm expressed in Massachusetts as compared to the national returns perhaps derives from the greater sophistication of the clergy there. The Massachusetts letters tended to be longer than the national average; and 60 percent of them fell into the less extreme categories of "favorable" and "critical." Thus, longer responses and more detailed weighing of pros and cons may well explain the somewhat lower support scores of the Massachusetts clergy, since they appear less likely than their compatriots from other less urban and industrial regions to bestow unequivocal political blessings even when the New Deal was basically in accord with their issue preferences.

The subject matter of these letters is fairly well concentrated. As shown in Table 3, only 10 issues drew comments from at least 10 percent of the clergy and only 26 issues received significant recognition. Social security and public works, the two programs specifically mentioned in the President's letter, appear by far the most salient to the Massachusetts clergy. This greater relative emphasis upon them was surely influenced by the explicit presidential query; but the spread of twenty percentage points between these two issues strongly suggests that genuine interest in them must have affected the propensity to respond. Interest in social security came naturally to Massachusetts residents. The state had been a leader in old age assistance many years before the New Deal began.¹⁰

TABLE 3

Saliency of Political Issues

Issues	Percentage of Clergy Citing It
Social Security	55%
Public works	35%
Bureaucracy & corruption	27%
Relief	22%
Agricultural policies (AAA)	21%
Prohibition	20%
Taxes	20%
Budget	17%
Government restrictions	
on private enterprise	13%
National Recovery Administration (NRA)	10%
Constitutionality of New Deal	10%
Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)	9%

Questions of burgeoning bureaucratic bulk, mismanagement, and corruption ranked third; and Table 3 almost certainly understates ministerial concern with this issue, since many of the remarks about several other programs were directed at their "bureaucratic" nature. While bureaucracy and corruption in government were nationwide concerns, they had special relevance in Massachusetts. After serving as mayor of Boston, James M. Curley was elected governor in late 1934. This election signaled one more step in a process whereby Boston Democrats were slowly wresting political control of the state from the western Democrats, led at that time by Senator David I. Walsh and Joseph B. Ely. This heated and continuing factionalism affected intrastate politics as well as the relationship of the state to the national government.¹¹ Bitter disputes occurred between the Governor and his opponents (Republicans as well as anti-Curley Democrats), including a running battle over the Governor's spending and taxation programs. Curley's foes accused state officials of lavish and wasteful spending; furthermore, Curley's appointment of allegedly unfit persons to various departments received statewide publicity. The charges and scandals prevented Curley from ever winning another statewide election. The most savage attacks upon Governor Curley came in the year following the clergy's responses to President Roosevelt's letter, but the build-up was underway and the political squabbles of 1935 and the preceding years surely had some impact upon the clergy's listing corruption and bureaucracy as a major issue.¹²

Next comes a group of five issues in which approximately one-fifth of the clergymen expressed interest. Four of them — relief as distinct from the works programs, the agricultural policies embodied in the AAA, taxes, and budgetary policy — are prominent additional facets of the New Deal, while the repeal of Prohibition touched upon the special concern of many churchmen. Somewhat lesser but still significant concern was also expressed about the NRA, constitutional issues pertaining to the New Deal, and the CCC, as well as governmental restrictions on and competition with private enterprise.

One of the most striking aspects of the clergymen's response was that very few issues evoked anywhere near an even division of opinion. Among the 16 issues on which more than 5 percent of the letter writers commented, only three (relief, the NRA, and the regulation of holding companies and public utilities) fell in the 40-60 percent approval range; and only one more (public works) was in the 30-70 percent range. Further, eight of the other ten less salient issues received approval scores of more than 80 percent or less than 20 percent. Thus, there appears to have been surprising unity of opinion upon most of these political issues.

Another surprising feature of the data is that, despite the overall approval of FDR and the New Deal, many of the individual issues were critically perceived. The clergy tendered majority approval, for example, to only three of the eleven issues eliciting a 10 percent comment rate; and only six of the sixteen most salient issues were positively evaluated. This anomaly becomes more explicable, though, if the single issues are grouped into several areas of

apparent common concern, as is done in Table 4 which lists the salience (i.e., the percentage of clergy who mention an issue) and favorableness (i.e., the percentage of letter writers mentioning an issue who were very favorable or favorably disposed towards it) of the 26 issues raised in the Massachusetts letters. It then appears that the principal policy thrust of the New Deal drew general approbation, while several particular facets were almost universally criticized.

At the most general level, one might say that the New Deal was aimed at restoring the American socio-political system to normal operating order and particularly at providing immediate aid for those suffering the most from the severe dislocations of the Depression. The idea of giving "help for the needy and worthy" appears to have been a major motivation for the clergymen's comments. Social security, which was by far the most cited issue, also was the most popular one as it elicited nearly unanimous approval and had the highest percentage of favorable answers of any subject gaining more than negligible notice. Evidently, the clergy deemed its potential beneficiaries, particularly the aged and disabled, well worthy of solicitude; and, from a practical standpoint, these groups probably represented the ministers' own parishioners hardest hit by the Depression. For example, a Boston minister wrote that the social security legislation "will rank in statesmanship with emancipation. If carried into effect as designed, it will more than justify your administration." Most of the reservations about social security were that "it did not go far enough." Others called it a "necessary first step in the right direction." Frequent approving references to the Townsend plan revealed how "liberal" Massachusetts clergymen were in regard to assistance to the needy aged.

TABLE 4

Salience and Favorableness of Individual Issues

Issue	Percent Citing	Percent Favorable*
<u>Help for Needy and Worthy</u>		
Social security	55%	90%
Public works	35%	63%
NRA	10%	54%
CCC	9%	84%
Govt. regulation of public utilities and holding companies	7%	59%
Bank closing laws	3%	64%
Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)	2%	100%
Child labor laws	1%	100%

<u>Aid to Undeserving</u>		
Relief	22%	40%
AAA	21%	15%
Processing tax	6%	10%
Handling of veterans' bonus	3%	89%
<u>Financial Irresponsibility</u>		
Taxes	20%	19%
Budget	17%	5%
Gold standard	2%	13%
Devaluation of dollar	1%	0%
Investment policy	1%	33%
<u>Governmental Excess</u>		
Bureaucracy and corruption	27%	4%
Govt. restrictions on private enterprise	13%	26%
Constitutionality of New Deal	10%	29%
<u>Moral Issues</u>		
Prohibition	20%	5%
President's family	1%	0%
<u>Foreign Affairs</u>		
Armaments	7%	0%
Munitions embargo	6%	87%
Relations with USSR	3%	20%
Relations with Latin America	2%	100%

* Favorable percentage of those mentioning the issue.

Although receiving much less attention than social security, the CCC was accorded wide acclaim, as evident in this comment: "I praise you for the wonderful work you have accomplished for the youth of the nation in your establishment of the C.C.C." This praise probably came because of the CCC's combination of providing a special program for the youth (presumably for their moral betterment) and of generating financial help for the needy. Perhaps these special features account for the twenty percentage point difference between the approval of the CCC and the general public works programs, although the latter received a favorable rating by a nearly 2-to-1 margin. Most of the references to the public works program focused upon the provision of aid and regained dignity to the participants, rather than the impact of the works projects themselves upon the general community. Typical comments were: "The Public Works Program here in Pittsfield seems to be making a splendid effort to provide work, and there is very little 'boon-doggling,' as General [Hugh] Johnson would say" and "Your Works Program has been a Blessing from on High for the people of this District."

The NRA received comparatively little mention, perhaps because it had already been discontinued. Support for government regulation of public utilities and holding companies and for the bank closing laws seemingly reflected demands for protecting the defenseless "little man" from the vagaries of the economic market and from the machinations of big business; and the one positive reference to child labor laws suggests another group in need of government protection. Finally, the few comments about the TVA concerned its regional impact rather than the provision of personal aid, although this may have derived from its geographic removal from the clergymen's constituents. On the whole, however, the clergy's comments on this set of issues clearly reflect support for decisive government action to help the "needy and worthy" help themselves.

Not all of the New Deal benefits were seen as flowing to worthy recipients. The most undeserving, at least from the regional perspective of Massachusetts, seems to have been the farmers. The farm programs embodied in the AAA policies evoked criticism from over 85 percent of the clergy who mentioned them. The previously noted relatively urban nature of Massachusetts and the sample of clergymen partially accounts for this overwhelming rejection of FDR's farm policies, but these attitudes were also comprised of a strong moral dimension. One Catholic priest bluntly declared, "Destroying of food stuffs is sinful, criminal and idiotic," and a Protestant minister wrote, "The destruction of crops and animals is a cruel and wicked thing, when so many are hungry. Economically it is worse than stupid." Biblical references ran through this response: "He who attempts to relieve the farm crisis by paying bounties for the destruction of cotton and the slaughter of little pigs becomes a party with the parasite and pestilence. He becomes destructive like disease; a scourge like the locust; and a doer of that which any school boy knows is not only foolish but sinful." Clergymen serving industrial centers saw the various AAA programs, particularly the processing tax, as unfairly favorable to farm regions at the expense of people dependent upon industry for survival.

The near unanimous praise by the few letters citing the issue of FDR's opposition to the veterans' bonus also indicated a feeling that a group was demanding too much. Two letters are worth quoting: "I watched with admiration your stalwart refusal to give in to the Soldiers' Bonus stampede." "I rejoice in your stand concerning Veterans. Disabled veterans and aged or infirm persons are deserving of preference, but too long war veterans have been thought of as a group deserving special favor."

In contrast to the near unanimity about the first three issues, relief stimulated a much closer division of opinion. Still, it merits inclusion in this category, since its approval score is 16 percentage points below the least popular program in the first group and since a fairly strong majority of 60 percent opposed direct relief. The prevailing opinion was that, while some direct relief may have been necessary initially, the scope of the program had ballooned past all justification. The heated ideological and moralistic flavor of many of

the denunciations also implies that most of the people “on the dole” were perceived as “undeserving.” A minister from Athol wrote: “I have found in this town, and no doubt it exists throughout the nation, that while ‘Relief’ has been a great help to some thoroughly worthy people, it has also opened the way for the unworthy to take advantage and plan *not to work* but to get their living out of the Government.” A minister from Worcester wrote: “A point that bothers many of us is the pauperizing effect of so much of our present legislation. Granted that at times drastic relief measures may be necessary, to extend them beyond this point is to rob people of their incentive and create a false attitude towards life. This idea of ‘Uncle Sam’ as an indulgent ‘Papa,’ forever able to do the Santa Claus act, is mighty bad for moral fibre. The ‘something for nothing’ attitude in life is gaining ground fast enough without receiving government impetus.” From a wealthy suburb of Newton came this response: “Too much of the New Deal seems to me too ideal. For instance, efforts to help the underprivileged have in so many cases done permanent harm by making the sufferers dependent on the government. What seemed at first to be Christian charity to many of us, seems now to have robbed many people of their independence and morale, and made them more underprivileged than ever.”

In addition to the universal condemnation of the dole — except as a one-time emergency act to prevent imminent starvation — many of the criticisms of the previously discussed public works program perceived them as merely “work relief.” Here are three reactions: “One of the most serious indictments of the Works Program is: that it condemns the vast majority of men to regimentation, to routine tasks; tasks, which are monotonous, and give little opportunity for work that is creative, artistic, and satisfying.” “The men who work for the WPA should be glad to have a chance to earn a living for their family, instead, they loaf on the job and do almost nothing and they become lazy, and will not take any job where they would make more money but where they would have to work more.” “I am sure that the general impression is that too many ‘bums’ and minimal ‘unemployables’ received aid and work while the thrifty are being penalized.”

Certain governmental activities, not just particular beneficiaries, also received a jaundiced appraisal. Probably the most severe criticism was directed toward the “financial irresponsibility” issues. The 95 percent criticism of the large budgetary imbalances necessitated by the New Deal programs, as well as the few references of unease about tampering with the gold standard and devaluing the dollar and about general investment policy, certainly demonstrate that these clergymen were no disciples of Keynesian economics or FDR’s application of it in American politics. As one wrote: “Your devaluation of the dollar and your vacating the legal right of holders of gold bonds to secure the gold their contract promised them are nothing more or less than robbery. (I have no gold bonds.)”

Taxes too were generally seen as much too high and oppressive. A Spencer minister asked: “Will present policies hang a millstone about the necks of the

next generation in the form of oppressive taxation?" Two other responses indicated serious future problems: "The appropriation of thousands, millions and billions has doped the sense of thrift." "I am sure that the vast sums of money we are spending today will fail to meet our need and can be nothing but a temporary poultice on the sores created by our greed and selfishness."

A contradiction might appear here between the approval of many important New Deal programs and the strong rejection of budgetary imbalances and the current level of taxation, the major producer of governmental revenue, which would seemingly be necessary for financing New Deal programs. The answer, of course, is that the clergymen perceived a significant part of the New Deal as an unnecessary "orgy of spending." As a minister serving Vineyard Haven flatly declared, "You have squandered billions of dollars in the effort to help the poor and improve business. Not one dollar in ten has done real good."

Perceived governmental excess also drew sharp criticism. Concern was particularly sharp regarding the rapid growth of a governmental bureaucracy which was generally seen as overpaid and underproductive. Thus, the issue area of bureaucracy and political mismanagement and inefficiency ranked third in salience and evoked almost universal criticism. Here are ministerial reactions from four widely separated cities in the state: "The increasing power of our national government, with its inevitable bureaucracy is a menace to our liberty." "I fear the building up of a bureaucracy which will in time be to this country as great a menace as the army was to ancient Rome." "An elaborate bureaucracy has paved the way for extensive graft and political favoritism at the expense of the industrious, thrifty and self-respecting citizens." "I fear the power of these experimenters with vast sums at their disposal, by which they may try to foist a new experiment in government upon us, a centralized bureaucracy with enormous power but sophomoric judgement."

On a more theoretical plane, the clergy strongly rejected government restrictions on and competition with private enterprise. A single response may be quoted here: "We think that economic goods must be produced by industry and not by government. We believe the industries are the sole source of adequate financial support of government, and if the government goes into competition with industry, it cripples the very thing that supports the government financially. Government should not kill the goose that lays the gold eggs on which it thrives." In view of the evaluations of questions concerning the constitutionality of New Deal programs, Roosevelt could take comfort that his respondents did not fill the benches of the Supreme Court.

Beyond the preceding issues of secular policy, the Massachusetts clergy expressed a degree of concern with "moral" questions, most particularly the repeal of Prohibition. Approximately one-fifth of the clergymen mentioned Prohibition; and on this issue approving statements were few and far between. Many Protestant ministers blamed Prohibition repeal directly for rising crime and lowered personal morals: "The most difficult and most degrading condition with which we have to deal is caused by the return of the

saloon. Our community, formerly very clean in this respect, is pitiable now with many drunken people upon our streets. Conditions are unspeakably worse since repeal." "Our Christian nation ought not to make money out of selling poison and debauching its citizens. What exalts the people is right; what debases them is wrong." Furthermore, a few respondents made caustic comments about the alleged immorality of the President's immediate family. Thus, the expected clerical concern with moral issues certainly influenced the content of their letters.

Comments on foreign affairs form the final residual category described by Table 4. Underlying the foreign policy orientations are an anticommunism militating against relations with the Soviet Union and a pacificism causing support for the arms embargo and opposition to increased expenditures for armaments. The latter position was derived from feelings that military outlays should be deferred until more pressing social and domestic problems were solved.

Thus far, we have described only the overall percentages of Massachusetts clergymen showing concern over and approving various New Deal programs. In addition, differences among the clergymen might explain some of the variations in the observable opinions. Four traits of the clergymen can be used to explain their beliefs about the New Deal. Along with the clergymen's religion and size of place of residence noted in Table 1, we collected data on their religious and political environment as measured by the proportions of Catholic residents and 1932 Democratic votes in their home county. A fairly sophisticated statistical technique, analysis of covariance, was then applied to see whether the clergymen's tendency to cite and approve New Deal issues can be explained by these four factors. In laymen's terms, analysis of covariance calculates how much of the "variation" in an attitude (i.e., the spread among differing responses to it) can be statistically accounted for by a group of explanatory variables.¹³

Table 5 reports the analysis of covariance results for the issue salience and favorableness of the New Deal as a whole and of its eight most salient issues. The percentage under each of the four explanatory variables indicates the percentage of variation that it statistically accounts for independently of the influence of the other three; and the total, which is the sum of these four figures, shows their combined explanatory impact. Whenever one of the three environmental factors accounts for more than 1% of the variations in attitudes about a New Deal program, it is preceded by either a plus or minus sign to show whether its high values (e.g., large city size) or low values (e.g., weak Democratic voting) are associated with the attitude in question. Differences associated with religious affiliation will be discussed in more detail later.

TABLE 5
Influences on New Deal Perspective*

	Issue Salience				Issue Favorableness					
	Religion	City Size	Democratic Votes	Catholic Pop.	Total	Religion	City Size	Democratic Votes	Catholic Pop.	Total
Overall New Deal	—	—	—	—	—	2.1%	0.0%	2.0%	1.1%	2.4%
Social security	8.6%	.1%	-1.6%	.0%	10.3%	7.9%	.8%	.4%	.1%	9.2%
Public works	2.9%	.2%	.4%	.1%	3.6%	3.6%	.3%	.8%	-3.5%	8.2%
Relief	3.5%	.5%	.1%	.3%	4.4%	1.2%	+ 3.9%	+1.6%	.1%	6.8%
AAA	3.7%	.0%	+2.2%	.1%	6.0%	21.6%	+ 4.6%	+2.2%	+2.3%	30.7%
Taxes	3.9%	.5%	.0%	.0%	4.4%	8.5%	+ 1.4%	.4%	-3.9%	14.2%
Budget	2.0%	.0%	-1.5%	.0%	3.5%	3.9%	+13.3%	+1.5%	+5.8%	24.5%
Bureaucracy	4.2%	.1%	.2%	.0%	4.5%	9.6%	.0%	.0%	-1.4%	11.0%
Prohibition	13.3%	.2%	.7%	.1%	14.3%	16.7%	+ 2.4%	.6%	.5%	20.2%

*Issue salience is whether a clergyman mentions an issue in his letter (since all of them mentioned the New Deal, no variation occurs here); and issue favorableness is the degree of approval or disapproval tendered to a subject by those clergymen who commented upon it. The percentages in this Table represent the proportion of the variation in the attitude in question that can be statistically accounted for by the explanatory factor independently of the effects exerted by the other three.

The overall results in Table 5 imply several conclusions. First and most striking is that a clergyman's religion, rather than the environment in which he lived, exerted the most important influence on how he evaluated the New Deal as religion had the greatest explanatory impact on all the salience and seven of the nine favorableness items, usually by an overwhelming margin. This probably results from religion's being our one indicator of the actual individual, as apart from his broader social milieu which contains many different types of people. Second, these potential explanatory factors had only a moderate impact at best upon New Deal perspectives. The highest proportion of explained variation for the salience items is a rather modest 13%; and only three of the favorableness variables reach even the moderate 20% to 30% range. Third, the explanatory power of these four variables, especially the environmental ones, was greater for favorableness than for salience. These second and third findings suggest again that the socio-economic and political problems of the time were so massive that almost everyone recognized them but that some variations in how the New Deal was viewed stemmed from the clergymen's political and social predilections.

Fourth, we expected that residence in larger cities, more Democratic counties, and more heavily Catholic counties should be associated with support for the New Deal since all these factors should bring political liberalism. These hypotheses are generally supported, although significant exceptions occurred. City size surprisingly had little effect on issue salience, but it was the most important determinant of the favorableness of attitudes about budgetary matters and relief with the larger cities being more favorably disposed toward these two issues. City size was also associated with greater approval (or, more accurately, less disapproval) of several other aspects of the New Deal, including the AAA and agricultural policies. This last finding in conjunction with the previously noted moralism of the clergymen's criticism of the AAA implies that these attitudes were stimulated by liberal-conservative differences, not by urban-rural ones as would have been expected. A Democratic environment was also marginally associated with greater support for several New Deal programs; and it was the only environmental variable significantly affecting saliency. However, while clergymen from the more Republican counties were more likely to cite the unpopular budget issue, the anticipated greater Democratic response to popular issues and lesser to unpopular issues was reversed for the AAA and social security. Finally, a Catholic religious environment was associated with two positive and three negative evaluations of the New Deal. This mixture was probably caused by the very low percentage of Catholic clergy in our sample which means that minority Protestants probably predominated in the returns from many Catholic areas. In any event, the marginal influence of these environmental variables must still be stressed.

Since religion appears by far the most important influence on these attitudes, we now turn to a more detailed comparison of the perspectives of clergy in the six largest denominations in our sample — Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Baptists, Methodists, Catholics, and Unitarians. Table 6 presents

salience and favorableness percentages for each of the denominations. Because of the relatively small numbers in these religious categories, the number of issues for which meaningful comparisons can be made are substantially reduced. In particular, extreme caution is warranted in interpreting any of the "favorableness" percentages that are computed from numerical bases of less than twenty.

TABLE 6

Issue Salience and Favorableness by Denomination

Issue	Unitarian		Catholic		Congreg.		Episcopal		Methodist		Baptist	
	Sal	Fav	Sal	Fav	Sal	Fav	Sal	Fav	Sal	Fav	Sal	Fav
Overall												
New Deal	—	83%	—	79%	—	73%	—	69%	—	69%	—	61%
Social												
Security	71%	94%	21%	100%*	59%	92%	61%	93%	69%	92%	61%	91%
Public												
Works	42%	80%*	29%	75%*	38%	55%	42%	68%	31%	64%*	36%	71%*
Relief	17%	50%*	14%	25%*	27%	45%	22%	64%*	26%	33%*	28%	36%*
AAA	21%	60%*	14%	0%*	20%	19%*	12%	17%*	37%	15%*	18%	14%*
Taxes	29%	14%*	11%	0%*	27%	32%	14%	14%*	14%	40%*	15%	17%*
Budget	13%	0%*	4%	0%*	16%	0%*	18%	0%*	23%	0%*	15%	16%*
Bureaucracy	13%	0%*	39%	0%*	23%	5%*	35%	12%*	40%	7%*	26%	0%*
Prohibition	4%	0%*	7%	0%*	27%	9%	8%	50%*	49%	0%*	36%	0%*

*Percentages calculated from numerical bases of less than twenty; they should be interpreted with some caution.

Salience is the percentage of clergymen in a religion who commented on an issue; favorableness is the percentage of those commenting on an issue favorably.

Given the only low to moderate proportions of variation explained by religion in Table 5, tremendous differences in these percentage figures should not be expected. Still, some interesting differences among the denominations emerge. Roosevelt and the New Deal proved popular with representatives of all six religions as over 60 percent of each denomination expressed approval of his administration. A significant variation in approval ratings did occur, though, which is consistent with conventional images of these religions' political and socio-economic orientations. FDR was most popular with the Unitarians, whose "liberal" reputation evidently offset their upper class social clientele, and the Catholics who were traditionally associated with Democratic Party preference. His lowest rating, conversely, were with the Baptists, whose presumed fundamentalism and conservatism should have made them less likely to applaud the New Deal. Regarding public works and relief, upper middle class Unitarians and Episcopalians may have taken a "paternal" position — that the poor and needy should be cared for. They expressed the strongest support for these two issues and were the two denominations most interested in public works. The Unitarians also ranked first in concern about social security. In addition, the more fundamentalist Baptists and

Methodists, who traditionally had been concerned with liquor, and to a lesser extent the Congregationalists, expressed the greatest interest in the repeal of Prohibition. The most striking contrast about issue salience in Table 6 is the Catholics' 21 percent interest in social security as compared with the next lowest score of 59 percent, perhaps reflecting stronger Catholic family structure and the greater ability of church charities to provide sustenance for the aged and disabled. Some tendency existed for the Methodists, probably reflecting a fundamentalist conservatism, to have been the most concerned about expanding government as they ranked the highest in salience on bureaucracy and corruption, the budget, and the AAA; also, they were the least approving of Roosevelt's public works and relief policies.

In sum, the Massachusetts clergy's evaluation of the New Deal can be divided into distinct pieces. On the one hand, the New Deal's thrust to provide "aid to needy and worthy" was seen as necessary and laudable, while on the other hand those facets of the New Deal which were seen as creating handouts to the undeserving, financial irresponsibility, governmental excess, and moral decay were condemned. The facts that most of the issues raised by the clergymen were overwhelmingly approved or disapproved and that several potential explanations for differences in their opinions proved to be relatively important indicate widespread recognition of the socio-economic problems which called forth the revolutionary New Deal programs and of both the credits and debits of FDR's response to a prostrate America. Thus, the supporters and opponents of the overall New Deal among the clergymen evidently saw the "help for the needy and worthy" from a different vantage point. These opposing perspectives formed the key determinant of whether the New Deal was given an overall favorable or unfavorable evaluation. On the one hand, the minority of New Deal opponents applied their general logic of condemning governmental excess and interference in the private sphere to "help for the needy and worthy" as well. On the other hand, for the majority of clergy in our Massachusetts sample, the aid which these programs provided for needy and worthy people justified them and, ultimately, the broader efforts of the New Deal, despite its many untoward features.

Perhaps the most striking feature of these data is the relative weakness of the opposition to the expansion of governmental services *per se*. Bureaucracy, financial irresponsibility, and the dole received strong condemnation, but the New Deal was generally praised for its programs in the areas of social security, public works, and the regulation of holding companies and public utilities. All these had been harshly condemned as components of Roosevelt's "creeping socialism" — a charge to which the clergy as a group should have been particularly sensitive. Yet, only about a third of the responses extended their opposition to big government and handouts for the undeserving to the issues concerning "help for the needy and worthy." On the other end of the ideological spectrum, a significant number of clergymen avowed support for a socialist America; but many forms of governmental intervention into the private sphere were overwhelmingly rejected. Clerical acceptance of a greatly broadened scope for public authority was also in accord with the public opinion of

that time which demanded increased public services.¹⁴ What emerges, then, is a pragmatic, not an ideological, perspective upon the use of government. Governmental activity should be encouraged where it is necessary for the amelioration of valid and pressing social problems; but there were many areas, definable upon rational and pragmatic grounds, where the restriction of the public sphere was most definitely warranted.

NOTES

1. For details of the magnitude of the Great Depression, see Maurice L. Farrell, *The Dow Jones Average, 1885-1970* (n.p., 1971); William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940* (New York, 1963), pp. 1-3; Frank Freidel, *The New Deal in Historical Perspective* (Washington, 1959), pp.1-3; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Crisis of the Old Order, 1919-1933* (Cambridge, 1957), pp. 248-56.
2. Printed in Samuel I. Rosenman, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt* (New York, 1938), IV, 370.
3. These letters are housed in eighty-one archival boxes in the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park, New York.
4. *Boston Herald*, June 17, 1936; *New Bedford Standard-Times*, Dec. 3, 1935; *New York Times*, March 3, 1935. See also "The AAA and the Textile Crises," *The Nation*, vol. 140 (1935) p. 496.
5. *New York Times*, Dec. 18, 1935; *Boston Herald*, March 23, 1935.
6. *Gloucester Times*, Nov. 29, 1935; *Springfield Union*, June 26, 1935; *Worcester Gazette*, Sept. 11, 1935; *Berkshire* (Pittsfield, Mass.) *Eagle*, Dec. 5, 1934; *New York Times*, March 3, 1935.
7. *Springfield Union*, June 26, 1935.
8. In 1932, Roosevelt gained only 52 percent of the combined votes of Democrats and Republicans; and in 1936 this margin was increased to only 55 percent. Minor party candidates combined garnered no more than six percent of the presidential vote in either election. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. (ed.), *History of American Presidential Elections, 1789-1968* (New York, 1971), III, 2806 and 2914.
9. These statistical summaries and Mills' comments are in the Clergy File, Roosevelt Library.
10. See Alton A. Linford, *Old Age Assistance in Massachusetts* (Chicago, 1949).
11. For an excellent survey of these interrelated politics, see Harold Gorvine, "The New Deal in Massachusetts," in John Braeman, et al. (eds.) *The New Deal: The State and Local Levels* (Columbus, Ohio, 1975), pp. 3-44. Also helpful are Duane Lockard, *New England State Politics* (Princeton, 1959), pp. 119-47, and James T. Patterson, *The New Deal and the States: Federalism in Transition* (Princeton, 1969). For the historical background of New Deal politics, see J. Joseph Huthmacher, *Massachusetts People and Politics, 1919-1933* (Cambridge, 1959).

12. For examples of attacks upon corruption and petty politics of the Curley regime, see Ray Kierman, "Jim Curley, Boss of Massachusetts," *American Mercury*, vol. 37 (1936), pp. 137-51; Louis M. Lyons, "Jim Curley and His Gang," *The Nation*, vol. 142 (1936), pp. 540-42; Joseph F. Dineen, "The Kingfish of Massachusetts," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, vol. 173 (1936), pp. 343-57.
13. For a more technical description of the analysis of covariance statistical technique, see Hubert M. Blalock, Jr., *Social Statistics*, 2nd Edition (New York, 1972), chapters 16 and 20.
14. For example, between 1936 and 1940, repeated surveys showed that social security and old age pensions were supported by over 90 percent of the citizenry. In a 1938 poll, 81 percent believed that government should provide medical care for those who could not afford it, and 59 percent were willing to pay higher taxes to support such a program. See Rita James Simon, *Public Opinion in America: 1936-1970* (Chicago, 1974), pp. 25, 27.