

Economic Recovery Conference Role Play

Crucial Issues

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt has called a conference in Washington D.C. to discuss ways the government can help the economy recover from the Great Depression. Representatives from different sectors of the economy have been invited to the White House. The president has promised Americans a “New Deal,” but it is unclear what exactly that means. You will help advise the president on what should and should not be included in his National Recovery Act—the first major law of the “New Deal.” For each issue, you *must* have a position. Some issues you will feel strongly about; put an asterisk (*) next to each of these. Other issues you will not feel as strongly about; in the “dealing” session, these will be the issues to give and take on.

Here are the issues on which you must have a position for the Economic Recovery Conference:

1. Aiding the unemployed. In 1933, the unemployment rate reached 25 percent. There are now 15 million people unemployed.
 - a. **Should the government provide direct relief (money for food, clothing, shelter) to the unemployed? Should it be administered by the state or federal government?**

 - b. **Should the government directly employ people for building “public works”—roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, parks, public squares, dams, electrical grids—construction that benefits the communities of the United States? If so, why?**

2. Fixing our food system. The depression has hit farmers and agricultural businesses particularly hard, because food and farm prices have been in decline since the Great War (World War I). For over a decade now, farms have been producing more than they can sell. **To help raise agricultural prices, should the government pay farm owners not to plant on part of their land and to destroy crops and farm animals? Or should the government buy or take surplus food from farm owners and give it to those who need it?**

