



THE SETUP

Six groups share one board of six sliders.

Project the board. Split the class into the six groups below and hand each group its page. On its turn a group drags **one slider** up to **three notches** and presses **Done**. Turn order is redrawn every round. Three rounds, eighteen moves.

BEFORE YOU START • 5 MIN

Keep page 1. Hand out pages 2–7, one per group.

Give groups four minutes to read their page and pick a first move. They get three moves for six sliders.

EACH ROUND • 10–12 MIN

The group at the board drags a slider. **The graphs move as they drag**, before they press Done.

An arrow in the group's color under each slider marks where that group wants it.

WATCH FOR THE TUG OF WAR

Any group can pull a slider straight back.

Political Backlash rises with every move. Undoing another group's move raises it about three times as fast.

BETWEEN ROUNDS • 3 MIN

History moves sliders by itself. After round 1 the Dust Bowl raises Farm Price Supports. After round 2 the Supreme Court lowers Business Regulation and Farm Price Supports.

Read the card aloud. Groups fill in their reflection lines while it is on screen.

THE SIX GROUPS

Hoover Republicans

Balance the budget. Relief is the states' job.

FDR's Brain Trust

Try something. If it fails, try something else.

Share Our Wealth

Cap the fortunes and hand out the difference.

Liberty League

The Constitution does not bend for an emergency.

Organized Labor – CIO

The right to organize, enforced in the shop.

The Farm Bloc

Parity or nothing.

WHAT THE FOUR MEASURES MEAN

MEASURE	STARTS AT	WHERE IT STOOD IN 1936
Unemployment	24.9%	16.9% counting WPA workers as unemployed, about 10% counting them as employed
Bank & business confidence	18	Deposits recovered. Private investment did not.
Relief reaching people	8	Millions reached. Farm tenants and most Black southern workers were not.
Political backlash	22	High. Court-packing, the sit-down strikes and the 1937 recession were all still ahead.

Groups do not see this table. The black line on the unemployment graph shows the real figures: 24.9% in 1933, 21.7%, 20.1%, 16.9% in 1936.



Hoover Republicans

"The budget must balance. Relief is the job of the states and private charity."

You ran the country when it broke, and you deny that you broke it. You see a worldwide shock hitting a sound American system, and you believe federal handouts would do lasting harm to the people who took them. After 1933 you are the opposition, with enough votes to slow things down.

WHERE YOU WANT THE SIX SLIDERS

SLIDER	WHERE IT STARTS	YOU WANT	YOUR CASE
Federal Spending	2 – Cutting to balance the books	 ◀ pull down to 1	A government that cannot pay its own bills restores nobody's confidence.
Taxes on Wealth	3 – A modest top rate	 ◀ pull down to 2	Taxing capital away is taxing away the jobs it would have built.
Business Regulation	1 – Industry regulates itself	 hold at 1	Industry knows its own business better than a federal board does.
Labor Protection	1 – Courts break the strikes	 hold at 1	A contract is between an employer and a man, not a government board.
Farm Price Supports	1 – Grow it and sell it for what you can	 ▶ push up to 3	Credit, yes. Paying men not to grow food, no.
Banking & Money	1 – Gold standard, no federal backstop	 ▶ push up to 4	Lend to sound banks. Do not debase the dollar to do it.

Gray box = where it starts. Colored box = where you want it. You get three moves, one per round, of up to three notches each. Any group can move any slider, including back.

PRIMARY SOURCE

Prosperity cannot be restored by raids upon the public Treasury... I am confident that our people have the resources, the initiative, the courage, the stamina and kindliness of spirit to meet this situation.

President Herbert Hoover, statement on unemployment relief, 3 February 1931

What kind of problem does Hoover say this is? Which slider follows from that?

REFLECTION • FILL IN AS YOU PLAY

Round 1: which slider did you move, and which one did you leave alone to do it?

Name a group that pulled a slider back the other way. What did that cost on the graphs?

After the final board: your group scored a percentage. Did the graphs improve while you got it? Cite one number.



FDR's Brain Trust

"Take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another."

You are professors, lawyers and social workers who have been handed a government. You share no economic theory. You believe Washington is the only institution left with the money and reach to act, and that acting badly beats waiting for the right plan.

WHERE YOU WANT THE SIX SLIDERS

SLIDER	WHERE IT STARTS	YOU WANT	YOUR CASE
Federal Spending	2 – Cutting to balance the books	 ► push up to 8	Nobody else is buying anything. The government has to.
Taxes on Wealth	3 – A modest top rate	 ► push up to 6	Pay for the programs, and spread the load upward.
Business Regulation	1 – Industry regulates itself	 ► push up to 7	If every firm raises wages together, none of them is undercut for it.
Labor Protection	1 – Courts break the strikes	 ► push up to 6	A wage that buys something is what ends a depression.
Farm Price Supports	1 – Grow it and sell it for what you can	 ► push up to 7	A third of the country farms. Their income is the economy.
Banking & Money	1 – Gold standard, no federal backstop	 ► push up to 9	Reopen the banks, insure the deposits, and stop prices falling.

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PRIMARY SOURCE

The country needs and, unless I mistake its temper, the country demands bold, persistent experimentation. It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, commencement address at Oglethorpe University, 22 May 1932

Roosevelt promises a method, not a policy. What does he gain by promising it that way, and what does he risk?

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Share Our Wealth

"Every man a king. No man is going to be too big while the rest go hungry."

You are Huey Long's movement: seven million names on the club rolls by 1935, and a senator who can hold the floor for fifteen hours. You say the economy is not broken. It works as designed, for a few hundred families. The fix is to take the surplus off the top and hand it down. You attack Roosevelt from the left.

WHERE YOU WANT THE SIX SLIDERS

SLIDER	WHERE IT STARTS	YOU WANT	YOUR CASE
Federal Spending	2 – Cutting to balance the books	 ► push up to 9	Spend it on households, not on contractors.
Taxes on Wealth	3 – A modest top rate	 ► push up to 10	There is enough. It is in the wrong hands. This is the lever.
Business Regulation	1 – Industry regulates itself	 ► push up to 5	Codes written by big business protect big business.
Labor Protection	1 – Courts break the strikes	 ► push up to 8	A union is how a working man gets a hearing at all.
Farm Price Supports	1 – Grow it and sell it for what you can	 ► push up to 6	Support the family farm, not the plantation.
Banking & Money	1 – Gold standard, no federal backstop	 ► push up to 7	Cheap money helps the man who owes, and that is most of us.

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PRIMARY SOURCE

We have in America today more wealth, more goods, more food, more clothing, more houses than we have ever had. We have everything in abundance here... But the thing that we have is a marvel of misery.

Senator Huey P. Long of Louisiana, Senate floor, Congressional Record, 1935

Long says this is a distribution problem, not a production problem. Which group in the room disagrees hardest, and on what grounds?

REFLECTION • FILL IN AS YOU PLAY

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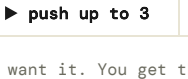


American Liberty League

"This is regimentation. The Constitution does not bend for an emergency."

You are corporate executives, conservative Democrats and lawyers, funded largely by the du Pont family and organized in 1934 to stop the New Deal. You keep losing at the ballot box, so you fight in the courts, where the commerce clause is on your side, and in the press. You believe an emergency that justifies anything justifies everything.

WHERE YOU WANT THE SIX SLIDERS

SLIDER	WHERE IT STARTS	YOU WANT	YOUR CASE
Federal Spending	2 – Cutting to balance the books	 ◀ pull down to 1	Emergency spending becomes permanent spending. Stop it now.
Taxes on Wealth	3 – A modest top rate	 ◀ pull down to 1	Confiscation dressed as taxation is still confiscation.
Business Regulation	1 – Industry regulates itself	 ◀ pull down to 0	Congress cannot hand its lawmaking power to industry boards.
Labor Protection	1 – Courts break the strikes	 ◀ pull down to 0	A federal board ordering a private employer is nowhere in the Constitution.
Farm Price Supports	1 – Grow it and sell it for what you can	 ▶ push up to 2	A tax on one group paid to another is a transfer, not a tax.
Banking & Money	1 – Gold standard, no federal backstop	 ▶ push up to 3	Leaving gold repudiates a promise the government made in writing.

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PRIMARY SOURCE

Extraordinary conditions do not create or enlarge constitutional power. Extraordinary conditions may call for extraordinary remedies. But the argument necessarily stops short of an attempt to justify action which lies outside constitutional authority.

Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes, for a unanimous Court, *A.L.A. Schechter Poultry Corp. v. United States*, 27 May 1935

Hughes says an emergency cannot enlarge federal power. If you hold to that, what must you accept when the emergency gets worse?

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Organized Labor – CIO

"The right to organize means nothing until it is enforced inside the shop."

You are the industrial unions. The AFL organizes skilled workers by craft and has ignored the assembly line for forty years. You want everyone in the plant in one union — skilled and unskilled, immigrant and native-born, Black and white — because only a union that size can shut a plant down. A right the law does not enforce is worth nothing.

WHERE YOU WANT THE SIX SLIDERS

SLIDER	WHERE IT STARTS	YOU WANT	YOUR CASE
Federal Spending	2 – Cutting to balance the books	 ► push up to 8	Public payrolls now, while the private ones are empty.
Taxes on Wealth	3 – A modest top rate	 ► push up to 7	The people who did best in the twenties can pay for the thirties.
Business Regulation	1 – Industry regulates itself	 ► push up to 5	Codes are worth something only where they are enforced in the shop.
Labor Protection	1 – Courts break the strikes	 ► push up to 10	Our first demand: enforce it inside the shop.
Farm Price Supports	1 – Grow it and sell it for what you can	 ► push up to 5	Farm families buy what our members build.
Banking & Money	1 – Gold standard, no federal backstop	 ► push up to 6	Cheap credit and rising prices mean rising wages.

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PRIMARY SOURCE

It is declared to be the policy of the United States to eliminate the causes of certain substantial obstructions to the free flow of commerce... by encouraging the practice and procedure of collective bargaining and by protecting the exercise by workers of full freedom of association, self-organization, and designation of representatives of their own choosing.

National Labor Relations (Wagner) Act, Section 1, 5 July 1935

Congress justified this as a regulation of commerce, not as a right of workers. Why word it that way, and who was the wording aimed at?

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The Farm Bloc

"Parity or nothing. We will not sell wheat below what it costs to grow."

Your depression started in 1920, not 1929. Wartime demand collapsed, you planted more to cover the mortgage, and the more you grew the less it was worth. By 1932 corn is so cheap that farm families burn it for heat, and farms are auctioned on the courthouse steps. In 1934 the topsoil starts to blow away. You have been in this for twelve years.

WHERE YOU WANT THE SIX SLIDERS

SLIDER	WHERE IT STARTS	YOU WANT	YOUR CASE
Federal Spending	2 – Cutting to balance the books	 ► push up to 6	Spend it on the countryside: roads, power and credit.
Taxes on Wealth	3 – A modest top rate	 ► push up to 5	Tax the processors, who buy cheap from us and sell dear.
Business Regulation	1 – Industry regulates itself	 ► push up to 4	Fair prices need a rule. Keep the board off the farm itself.
Labor Protection	1 – Courts break the strikes	 ► push up to 4	We hire men too. Back the right to organize, not the sit-down.
Farm Price Supports	1 – Grow it and sell it for what you can	 ► push up to 10	Parity. This is the only number that matters to us.
Banking & Money	1 – Gold standard, no federal backstop	 ► push up to 8	Every farm mortgage was written in dearer dollars. Inflate.

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PRIMARY SOURCE

It is hereby declared to be the policy of Congress... to establish and maintain such balance between the production and consumption of agricultural commodities... as will reestablish prices to farmers at a level that will give agricultural commodities a purchasing power with respect to articles that farmers buy, equivalent to the purchasing power of agricultural commodities in the base period.

Agricultural Adjustment Act, Declaration of Policy, 12 May 1933

The base period Congress chose was 1909–1914. Why pick those years, and who benefits from the choice?

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