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APUSH – A2

I – Essay 10, Ch. 10 Document Set 1

The U.S. constitution, after the war of 1812, then only ¾ of a century old, was now under a new generation’s test, a generation that possessed a unique character- Andrew Jackson. His dominant political views greatly affected American policy, which began a new era of change in United States history. Jackson’s political prowess in swaying the public can be seen in lines like, “…humble members of society,” and, “… all know that their success depends upon their toil, they are the bone and sinew of the country.” In these lines Jackson glorifies life as an average, working, American in the early 19th century. This tactic was a trump card he played often while campaigning his political ideals to the American people. Also, Jackson was almost synonymous in his policies with Jefferson in that he promotes the agricultural American society, and the lifestyle of the farmer.

In vetoing the recharter of the Bank of the United States Jackson says, “[it] exclude[s] the whole American people from competition in the purchase of this monopoly,” (Doc 4, ¶ 1). Jackson firmly makes his case against the Bank of the United States clearer, “more than a fourth is held by foreigners,” (Doc 4, ¶ 2) he goes on to say only the *residue* is held by a few of our own citizens, who are mostly of the richer class. He goes on to attack those in favor of the Bank by saying, “too often [they] bend the acts of government for their selfish purposes,” (Doc 4, ¶ 3). Jackson’s position is firmly against those who support the bank, he shows this by saying,

“By attempting to gratify their desires we have in the results of our legislation arrayed section against section, interest against interest, and man against man, in a fearful commotion which threatens to shake the foundations of our Union.”

* (Doc 4, ¶ 5)

Jackson strongly opposes the bank with the strong argument that it is not in the best interest for the American majority. Many of the words he uses show his angst against the legislation such as, “[the] prostitution of our Government.”

It cannot be said enough that Jackson was, “the people’s friend.” In Jackson’s farewell address he said that the Bank of the United States waged war upon the people, and that cities and communities were oppressed. In many of his standpoints references are made to the American people, “government would have passed from the hands of the many to the hands of the few,” (Doc 5, ¶ 2). Jackson says this when explaining the negative outcome had the bad legislation not been “conquered.” Andrew Jackson also keeps discrediting those class of politicians who were against his policies by describing, “[their] deceitful plans of public advantages and state interests and state pride they will endeavor to establish,” (Doc 5, ¶ 3).

Jackson’s tactic of representing the average American received praise. “[He] understands the people of the United States twenty times better that his antagonists,” said one senator (Doc 6, ¶ 1). Additionally, another senator showed more praise by saying things like, “His simple unostentatious manners carry into every heart the conviction of his honesty...” (Doc 6, ¶ 2). The senators continue to bolster Andrew Jackson in Document 6. One senator explained that even though some may think he is incapable of writing a good English sentence that many of the legislators don’t have what would be called a good literary education in Europe and that, “General Jackson understood the people of the United States better than, perhaps, any President before him,” (Doc 6, ¶ 5).

However, President Jackson did not capture everyone. One of his antagonists was Henry Clay, who had a darker view of Jackson’s leadership. His view was that Jackson was becoming too powerful in his office, “that the president has assumed a dangerous power over the Treasury of the United States,” (Doc 7, ¶ 1). Clay goes on to say, “The question is no longer what laws will Congress pass, but what will the executive not veto?” (Doc 7, ¶ 2). He is demonstrating the point that Jackson is over-exercising is executive position. Clay’s words are an obvious aggression towards President Jackson, “appoint in his place an executive favorite, totally inexperienced an incompetent…approaching tyranny.” (Doc 7, ¶ 3). Henry Clay is trying to reveal that Jackson is undermining the division of powers, “The premonitory symptoms of despotism are upon us,” (Doc 7, ¶ 4).

John L. O’Sullivan describes the power of veto, unlike Clay, as a “mutual suspensive power” which must be used to attain “free action of the popular opinion and will.” O’Sullivan also explains the importance of the public opinion, (Doc 8, ¶ 2). He fully explains his philosophy by stating, “a minority is much more likely to abuse power for the promotion of its own selfish interests, at the expense of the majority of numbers- the substantial and producing mass of the nation,” (Doc 8, ¶ 4). He closes by boosting democracy in his last paragraph by saying, “it is the cause of philanthropy…to bid it walk abroad through the free creation in its own majesty,” (Doc 8, ¶ 7).

John P. Kennedy’s then effectively explains that Whig philosophy rests upon the Madisonian platform. He describes his political stance as a Whig through his interpretation of the constitution, boldly saying, “[it] is the very constitution of our forefathers! I desire no farther commentary,” (Doc 9, ¶ 1). Pendleton then goes on to embolden his model of effective government, The Madisonian basis of government and policy. He lists, “It protected the Domestic Industry…It promoted Internal Improvements…It enlarged…It devised…It placed…” (Doc 9, ¶ 8-13).

During this era, where interest was arrayed against interest, many political viewpoints were altered. John Pendleton Kennedy accurately described this alteration,

“With this exception, a balmy peace reigned throughout our political world. The extremes of federalism had been tempered with an infusion of democratic flavor; the extremes of Democracy had been melted in an amalgam of Federalism. Both were the better for it.”

* (Doc 9, ¶ 1)

Many powerful policies were introduced during this time, and their acceptance or rejection was influential to United States history. What political standpoints politicians took during this time is also substantial in that it rose what our viewpoints and political parties are today. These events had a dramatic effect on American society, and they will always be remembered because they are not only important in explaining how our country became, but because we can apply what we learned from history to the future.