**Standard 8-6:** The student will understand the impact of Reconstruction, industrialization, and Progressivism on society and politics in South Carolina in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

**Enduring Understanding:**

South Carolina’s response to national crises during the first half of the twentieth century brought it back into full participation in the national experience. To understand the state’s changed status, the student will . . .

**8-6.4** Explain the effects of the Great Depression and the lasting impact of the New Deal on people and programs in South Carolina, including James F. Byrnes and Mary McLeod Bethune, the Rural Electrification Act, the general textile strike of 1934, the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Works Progress Administration, the Public Works Administration, the Social Security Act, and the Santee Cooper electricity project.

**It is essential for students to know:**

It is important that students understand that the Great Depression was not caused by the stock market crash. Although the crash marked the recognized beginning of the Great Depression nationally, South Carolina had been in depression many years before the crash (8-6.3). After the stock market crash, conditions continued to deteriorate in South Carolina. More banks failed and some textile mills closed their doors. More farmers lost their land to foreclosure and a railroad went bankrupt. A quarter of the people in South Carolina were unemployed and people had no money to spend in their local stores. Marriage and birth rates dropped dramatically as people postponed starting families because they could not afford them. Young men wandered from town to town or rode the rails searching for work or a handout. Charitable organizations, such as churches and community groups, could not keep up with the need for food, clothing and shelter. People looked to their government for help.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected President of the United States in November 1932 on the promise that he would bring a New Deal to the American people. By the time he was inaugurated in March of 1933, conditions were even worse. Roosevelt sought advice from South Carolinians, most notably James F. Byrnes and Mary McLeod Bethune. Byrnes was elected to the United States Senate in 1930 where he helped FDR to pass the New Deal through Congress and served as an important domestic policy adviser. Byrnes was South Carolina’s Senator until 1941 when he accepted an appointment to the Supreme Court. [Later he served as head of the Office of War Mobilization, Secretary of State and governor of South Carolina] Mary McLeod Bethune was an African American educator and civil rights leader who founded a college and organized the National Council of Negro Women. She served as the Director of Negro Affairs for the National Youth Administration and was an influential member of the unofficial “Black Cabinet” a group of African American leaders who President Roosevelt consulted.

In his first ‘Hundred Days’ in office, President Roosevelt started an aggressive program to bring relief, recovery and reform to the country. He used the radio in “fireside chats” to reassure the American people that they had “nothing to fear but fear itself.” New Deal programs were not specifically designed for South Carolina, however, certain programs had significant and long-term impacts on the people of South Carolina.

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) put unemployed young men to work in the nations’ parks. They lived in army camps and sent most of their pay home to help their struggling families and pumped money into the economy. Over 50,000 South Carolinians were employed in reforestation and soil conservation projects and in building state parks at Hunting Island, Paris Mountain, Poinsett and Myrtle Beach State Park. However the CCC reflected the prejudices of the times and was racially segregated.

The Public Works Administration (PWA) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) engaged in building projects that not only put people to work but also provided lasting improvements for the community. The PWA built schools, libraries and courthouses as well as U.S. Navy aircraft carriers. The WPA built highways, airports, bridges and playgrounds as well as hospitals and schools. Artists and writers were also employed by the WPA. They produced murals and plays and recorded interviews with former slaves that preserved the historical record of South Carolina African Americans. African Americans did not receive their fair share of New Deal assistance and continued to be discriminated against in hiring by these programs. Job creation programs put some people to work, alleviated their despair and economic hardship and pumped some money into the economy. However, the New Deal did not result in economic recovery.

The Social Security Act was designed as a reform of the system to prevent future depressions and provide protection for the elderly, the orphaned, the disabled and the unemployed. The system of old age pensions was particularly important to South Carolina because it was one of only a few states that did not offer such an insurance program. The cost was shared by workers and their employers. Social Security was also the basic social welfare legislation in the United States and set the precedent for future aid to people in need. Because of this, Social Security has come under criticism. However, the poverty rate for the elderly declined significantly as a result of Social Security and the Social Security System has had a profound impact on Americans of all ages.

The Santee Cooper electricity project was the largest New Deal project in South Carolina and was promoted by South Carolina Senator and New Deal supporter James F. Byrnes. The project built dams on the Santee and the Cooper Rivers, creating Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie. These hydroelectric dams produced power to light the region, provide jobs to those who built it and to others in industries made possible by the power the project provided, and improved living conditions for many South Carolinians. The Rural Electrification Act brought power to many of the farms and rural regions of South Carolina. By creating power cooperatives citizens were able to get government loans and work together to provide electricity to less populated areas where commercial power companies were unwilling to string power lines. By 1940, 25% of farms had electricity. Although dispossessed land owners were offered meager compensation, other farmers were able to install milking machines and water pumps that made farming more profitable.

Other New Deal programs were designed to address the problems of overproduction and declining prices for farmers and industry (8-6.3). The National Recovery Act set up codes for industries that would regulate prices for consumers and hours and wages for workers. However the code for the textile mills did not affect the “speed up” and the “stretch out” that mill owners used to get more productivity out of their workers, nor did it guarantee workers a forty hour week. As a result of the workers dissatisfaction with wages and working conditions mill workers in South Carolina joined a labor union and called a general strike in 1934. The strike affected mills all along the eastern seaboard. Soon violence broke out between union members and strike breakers (scabs). In South Carolina deputies fired on the crowd in Honea Path killing seven workers and injuring others. President Roosevelt urged the workers to end the strike and allow arbitration to find a settlement. Strikers agreed, but many South Carolina mill owners did not, keeping their mills closed even when the workers were ready to return. The strike led to the collapse of the union in South Carolina. The New Deal later passed laws that established a minimum wage and maximum hours for industrial workers and recognized their right to form a union and bargain collectively. In South Carolina the general textile strike intensified anti-union sentiment which continues to the present.

Although the New Deal had a lasting impact on the United States and on South Carolina, it did not end the Great Depression. The depression ended when the United States became involved in helping the Allies fight Hitler’s Germany in World War II.