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Already subject to widespread bank failures and farm depression after 1920, Idaho faced still worse banking panics and another era of disastrously low agricultural prices after 1930. State politics responded to economic crises. C. Ben Ross commenced an eight-year sequence of Democratic administration after his election as governor in 1930, and a revival of progressive reform (including provision for a return to state and county primary elections) came during his terms. National New Deal measures brought in heavy federal investment and substantial benefits to Idaho's farmers. Although Ross followed an independent course as governor, and Idaho finally voted to reject New Deal remedies, federal programs and expenditures had an important economic impact. As a refuge for dust Bowl families and as a recipient of large welfare and recovery investment, Idaho began to grow again after more than a decade of near stagnation. Few prominent New Deal Democrats remained active in Idaho's political affairs after 1939, when Republicans and conservative Democrats alternated in administering state government through 1949.

After 1940 a wartime economy, with greatly increased farm production and industrial expansion, brought considerable dislocation to Idaho's economy. Mining (except for gold) and lumbering also were stimulated greatly, while several large military installations helped to keep Idaho from losing population during wartime turmoil. Relocation of Pacific Northwest Japanese in Idaho also affected state development. Migrant labor became more prominent in Idaho's farm production, helping to replace some of those who left for military service in remote European and Asiatic battlegrounds. When stability began to return to Idaho's economy and political structure in 1946, a new series of postwar problems and opportunities replaced a sixteen-year era of uncertainty and disruption imposed by depression and war.

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