

Aftermath of World War I and the “Roaring 20s” (a quick overview)

Labor and Industry (problems led to red scare and short recession in 1920)

- Control of industries slowly went back to the private sector (production converted from war supplies back to everyday goods)---government no longer needed to pay for production of goods
- Severe labor unrest breaks out after War
 - soldiers wanted old jobs back
 - women were expected to go home and assume their traditional role
 - blacks were expected to go home and accept 2nd class citizenship
 - conversion of factories caused a period of layoff for many workers
- Protests and violence was blamed on Bolsheviks who supposedly infiltrated American Society and labor unions (“1st Red Scare”)
- Big business conservatives used the red scare to hurt the effectiveness of labor unions
- Once peacetime economy was restored (early 1921), labor unrest went away and consequently the “Red Scare” disappeared (will see it again in the 1950s with McCarthy)

American Society after the Great War

- Attempted to return to a state of isolationism
- America was truly the only country to emerge from WW I economically, politically, and militarily strong
- Revival of Nativism (especially against S. and E. Europeans)
 - 50% of industrial workers were from S. and E. Europe
 - much of S. and E. Europe experienced Anarchy and used socialism to solve problems
 - Sacco and Vanzetti case a prime example
- New Immigration Laws passed to keep S. and E. Europeans out of the United States
 1. Emergency Quota Act (1921)—based on 3% of each nationality living in U.S. in 1910 (actually benefited S. and E. Europeans)
 2. Immigration Quota Act (1924)---2% of nationality living in U.S. in 1890, no Japanese at all, Canadians and Latin Americans exempt
- Strengthening of the KKK
 - evolved into a Pro-American ideology (WASP)
 - anti-everything that was perceived to be a threat to traditional American morals and values
 - spread to Northern urban areas (Great Migration of Blacks)
 - D.W. Griffiths silent movie titled “Birth of a Nation” glorified the KKK
- Prohibition (Volstead Act leading to 18th Amendment)
 - population generally supported and felt it was permanent but still wanted to drink
 - organized crime skyrocketed in 1920s (e.g. Capone)
 - moon shining and bathtub gin emerged (very dangerous)
 - government really did not make an effort to enforce prohibition (small budget)

Defining Characteristics of the 1920s

- Moral/cultural clash
 - urban vs. rural
 - modernists vs. fundamentalists/Traditionalists
 - roles in society (especially gender roles)
 - Scopes Trial
- Move toward sophistication and modernity
 - Americans generally accepted the country as a modern nation progressing forward but the “neo-old guard” of the 1920s saw things differently
- Liberalization of Women (result of role in WW I, 19th Amendment)
 - roles and behavior in society changed
 - dress, attitude/outlook on life, forwardness with men
 - Alice Paul proposed and Equal Rights Amendment
 - Margaret Sanger advocated birth control
- Liberal sexual behavior (growing awareness of Freud’s theories on sex—sexual frustration could lead to health problems so sex was necessary to maintain ones mental and physical well being)---shocked the fundamentalists
- Rise in organized crime (bootlegging) and speakeasies
- Standardization of America began (radio, advertising, movies, etc.)
- Literary figures of the 1920s were very critical of tradition, materialism, and standardization