

# Politics of the Roaring Twenties, 1919–1929

The United States seeks postwar normality and isolation. The standard of living soars amid labor unrest, immigration quotas, and the scandals of the Harding administration.



Model T Ford.

## Section 1

# America Struggles with Postwar Issues

A desire for normality after the war and a fear of communism and “foreigners” lead to postwar isolationism.

# Postwar Trends

## The Effects of Peace on the Public

- War leaves Americans exhausted; debate over League divides them
- Economy adjusting: cost of living doubles; farm, factory orders down
  - soldiers take jobs from women, minorities
  - farmers, factory workers suffer
- **Nativism**—prejudice against foreign-born people—sweeps nation
- **Isolationism**—pulling away from world affairs—becomes popular

# HIS CH-12-1 POSTWAR ISSUES

## CAUSES

- **World War I exhausts Americans**
- **Americans want a return to simpler times before World War I**
- **Communist Revolution in Russia alarms U. S.**
- **Some Americans believe post-war labor unrest caused by immigrant anarchists and socialists**



## Isolationist Policy of 1920s

## EFFECTS


- **U. S. does not support League of Nations**
- **U. S. passes high tariffs that reduce international trade**
- **U. S. limits immigration from Japan and parts of Europe**
- **U. S. moves toward political conservatism**

## Fear of Communism

### The Red Scare

- **Communism**—economic, political system, single-party government
  - ruled by dictator
  - no private property
- 1919 Vladimir I. Lenin, Bolsheviks, set up Communist state in Russia *[Visual]*
- U.S. Communist Party forms; some Industrial Workers of the World join
- Bombs mailed to government, businesses; people fear Red conspiracy
- Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer takes action



 *Lenin at the Tribune* (1930),  
Alexander Gerasimov.

# Fear of Communism

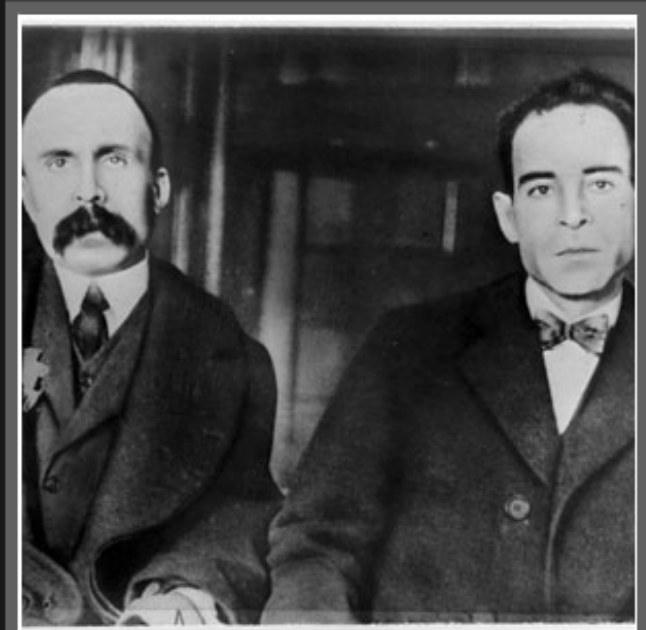
## The Palmer Raids


- Palmer, J. Edgar Hoover hunt down Communists, socialists, anarchists
- **Anarchists** oppose any form of government
- Raids trample civil rights, fail to find evidence of conspiracy

## Fear of Communism

### Sacco and Vanzetti

- Red Scare feeds fear of foreigners, ruins reputations, wrecks lives
- 1920, **Sacco and Vanzetti**, Italian immigrants, anarchists, arrested
  - charged with robbery, murder
  - trial does not prove guilt
- Jury finds them guilty; widespread protests in U.S., abroad *[Visual]*
  - Sacco, Vanzetti executed 1927



 Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti (1921).

# Limiting Immigration

## Anti-Immigrant Attitudes

- Nativists: fewer unskilled jobs available, fewer immigrants needed
- Think immigrant anarchists and socialists are Communist

## The Klan Rises Again

- Bigots use anti-communism to harass groups unlike themselves
- KKK opposes blacks, Catholics, Jews, immigrants, unions, saloons
  - 1924, 4.5 million members
- Klan controls many states' politics; violence leads to less power



# Limiting Immigration

## The Quota System

- 1919–1921, number of immigrants grows almost 600%
- **Quota system** sets maximum number can enter U.S. from each country
  - sharply reduces European immigration
- 1924, European arrivals cut to 2% of number of residents in 1890
- Discriminates against southern, eastern Europeans *[Visual]*
- Prohibits Japanese immigration; causes ill will between U.S., Japan
- Does not apply to Western Hemisphere; many Canadians, Mexicans enter

# A Time of Labor Unrest

## Postwar Labor Issues

- Government doesn't allow strikes in wartime; 1919 over 3,000 strikes
- Employers against raises, unions; label strikers as Communists

## The Boston Police Strike


- Boston police strike over raises, right to unionize
- Calvin Coolidge ends strike, replaces strikers with new policemen

## A Time of Labor Unrest

### The Steel Mill Strike *[Visual]*

- 1919, steel workers strike; companies use force, later negotiate
- Talks deadlock; Wilson appeals; strike ends
  - 1923 report on conditions leads to 8-hour day



 Chicago Steel Strike (1919).

# A Time of Labor Unrest

## The Coal Miners' Strike

- 1919, **John L. Lewis** becomes head of United Mine Workers of America
- Leads strike; defies court order to work; accepts arbitration
- Miners receive 27% wage increase; Lewis becomes national hero

## Labor Movement Loses Appeal

- In 1920s, union membership drops from over 5 million to 3.5 million
- Less than 1% of African Americans, just over 3% whites in unions

Section 2

# The Harding Presidency

The Harding administration appeals to America's desire for calm and peace after the war, but results in scandal.

# Harding Struggles for Peace

## International Problems

- President **Warren G. Harding** voices public desire for “normalcy”
- Hosts Washington Naval Conference; invites major powers, not Russia
- Secretary of State **Charles Evans Hughes** proposes disarmament, others agree
- In 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact nations renounce war as national policy

# Harding Struggles for Peace

## High Tariffs and Reparations

- **Fordney-McCumber Tariff** raises taxes on U.S. imports to 60%
  - Britain, France cannot repay U.S.
- Germany defaults; Dawes Plan—U.S. investors lend reparations money
  - Britain, France repay; resentment on all sides

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## Scandal Hits Harding's Administration

### Harding's Cabinet *[Visual]*

- Harding favors limited government role in business, social reform
- Creates Bureau of the Budget to help run government
- Has capable men in cabinet—Hughes, Herbert Hoover, Andrew Mellon
- Also appoints **Ohio gang**—corrupt friends who cause embarrassment



President Harding (front, third from right), Vice President Coolidge (front, second from right), and members of the cabinet.

# Scandal Hits Harding's Administration

## Scandal Plagues Harding

- Harding does not understand all issues facing nation
- Corrupt friends use their positions to become wealthy through graft

# Scandal Hits Harding's Administration

## The Teapot Dome Scandal

- **Teapot Dome scandal**—naval oil reserves used for personal gain *[Visual]*
- Interior Secretary **Albert B. Fall** leases land to private companies
- Takes bribes; is first person convicted of felony while in cabinet
- August 1923, Harding dies suddenly
- VP Calvin Coolidge assumes presidency, restores faith in government

Section 3

# The Business of America

Consumer goods fuel the business boom of the 1920s as America's standard of living soars.

# American Industries Flourish

## Coolidge's Economic Policy

- Calvin Coolidge favors minimal government interference in business
  - allow private enterprise to flourish

# American Industries Flourish

## The Impact of the Automobile


- Cars change life—paved roads, gas stations, motels, shopping centers *[Visual]*
- Give mobility to rural families, women, young people
- Workers live far from jobs, leads to **urban sprawl** (spread of cities)
- Auto industry economic base for some cities, boosts oil industry
- By late 1920s, 1 car for every 5 Americans

# American Industries Flourish

## The Young Airplane Industry

- Airplane industry starts as mail service for U.S. Post Office
- Weather forecasting begins; planes carry radios, navigation tools
- Lockheed Company produces popular transport plane of late 1920s
- 1927, Pan American Airways inaugurates transatlantic flights *[Visual]*



 Airline Poster for Pan American Airways (1934).

# America's Standard of Living Soars

## Incomes Grow

- Average annual income rises over 35%, from \$522 to \$705

## Electrical Conveniences

- Factories use electricity to run machines
- Development of alternating current gives electricity to suburbs
- By end of 1920s, more homes begin to have electrical appliances
- Appliances make housework easier, free women for other activities *[Visual]*
- Appliances coincide with trend of women working outside home



# HIS CH-12-3 BUSINESS IN AMERICA



# America's Standard of Living Soars

## The Dawn of Modern Advertising

- Advertising agencies hire psychologists to learn to appeal to public
- Make brand names familiar nationwide; push luxuries as necessities *[Visual]*
- Businesspeople work with service groups
  - promote selves as benefactors of society

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# A Superficial Prosperity

## Producing Great Quantities of Goods

- Most Americans believe prosperity will last forever
- Productivity increasing, businesses expanding
- Mergers in auto industry, steel, electrical equipment, utilities
- Chain stores develop; national banks allowed to create branches *[Visual]*
- Income gap between workers, managers grows
- Iron, railroad industries not prosperous; farms suffer losses

# HIS CH-12-3 BUSINESS IN AMERICA

F. W. WOOLWORTH CO.  
5 AND 10 CENT STORE



# HIS CH-12-3 BUSINESS IN AMERICA



# HIS CH-12-3 BUSINESS IN AMERICA



# A Superficial Prosperity

## Buying Goods on Credit

- **Installment plan**—pay for goods over extended period with interest
- Banks provide money at low interest rates
- Some economists, business owners think installment buying excessive
- Think is sign of fundamental weakness behind superficial prosperity



**End of Chapter**