

## American History

The Federal Government of the United States acquired immense power with the nation's participation in World War I. While the American public did not agree with America's participation in WWI, outside forces such as Winston Churchill and American businessmen who are holders of British bonds have influenced the American government to participate in WWI, supporting Great Britain. America helped Great Britain defeat Germany during the Battle of Atlantic. America's role during WWI, however, is not limited to escorting the cargo ships of Great Britain cross the Atlantic, America participated in international trading. America saw an economic opportunity during WWI. Hence, America started producing weapons and war vehicles and sold them to other countries. Such trading scheme during the war enabled America to improve its economy. Thus, while the rest of the world, particularly Europe was struggling to recover from the physical, economic and political destruction caused by the First World War, the United States was experiencing a decade of peace and prosperity. The 1920s was probably one of the most prosperous time period in the history of America. It was during this period that Americans experienced great economic and cultural prosperity.

It was during the 1920s that America reached its consumerism period. As people have money to spend, the demands for consumer goods was very high. People were always looking for more comfort and more leisure. Technological advancements particularly automobile and sophisticated advertising techniques transformed the American life.

New inventions and new discoveries resulted to the production of labor-saving devices which lightened the tasks of women working in the home. Women have more free time which they spent shopping for goods. Likewise, innovations in transportation and communication such

as automobiles and airplanes altered working hours and provided more leisure time. Thus, there was a high demand for various forms of entertainment.

All these changes and innovations altered the social attitudes and personal values of the American public. The mass culture resulted in the decline of individuality as more and more Americans found heroes in sports figures, movie idols, and other celebrities. Such social changes were manifested in fashion and hairstyle as well as the emerging openness about human sexuality. Consequently, consumerism and economic necessities caused more and more women to work outside the home.

While the American public greatly benefited from the advantages brought by new technological advancements, innovations and inventions, there were some people who were threatened with the rapidly changing social order. Thus, special interest groups attempting to protect traditional attitudes and values emerged during this period. Religious fundamentalism started gaining strength while other groups based on increasing nativism and radicalism start emerging. The Ku Klux Klan which was revived in 1915 gained strength into the 1920's. Members of this group were white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants who were devoted to "100 percent Americanism" and were against blacks, immigrants, Catholics, and Jewish people. Thus, racism became prevalent during this period.

The 1920s was indeed the age of urbanization and consumerism in the U.S. The technological advancements during that period greatly improved the American lifestyle, altering social structure and social consciousness. While the 1920s was a period of prosperity and comfort, it was also the period of radicalism and racism. More importantly, it was the same prosperity and comfort that would lead America to great depression.

The great economic boom and prosperity in the 1920s was followed by the great depression characterized by long-term unemployment. With many people out of work, there was too little money to buy things. Businesses were unable to sell goods and services. Consequently, the whole nation was in great depression. The once prosperous and comfortable American life turned into a life of malnutrition and starvation, unemployment and marital and domestic problems. With industrial workers losing their job, farmers falling deeply into debts as drought devastated the nation, and marginal workers getting desperate, the Americans were in desperate need for a political leader who will lead the country out of depression. The Americans found that leader in Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Unlike his predecessor Hoover, Roosevelt was willing to experiment. He was ready to do anything to bring America out of the great depression. Knowing that America was searching for a change, Roosevelt gave what it wanted and needed. More importantly, Roosevelt's innate compassion for the ordinary citizens of America enabled him to acknowledge the giant gap between the wealthy and the poor and to work towards lessening, if not eliminating that wide gap.

Perhaps that most important decision that Roosevelt has done was his realization that the great depression has born a psychology of pessimism among the Americans and that America's collective pessimism was as an enemy as the depression itself. To help assuage the people's collective pessimism, Roosevelt communicated with the public every week to inform them of the actions that his administration was undertaking. Roosevelt's weekly communication with the American public served as an assurance to the people that recovery was underway. Thus, increasing the confidence of America to Roosevelt and his administration. Indeed, Roosevelt's weekly communication with the people further strengthened his already charming personality

that endeared him to the people. His use of the radio to bring his message to the American public was very successful. Americans became supportive of Roosevelt and his plans.

During his first one hundred days in the office, Roosevelt pushed one program after program through Congress to get the economy going. Roosevelt's program focused on providing relief, creating jobs and stimulating economy recovery. Historians have categorized Roosevelt's programs as measures for relief, recovery and reform.

Collectively known as the New Deal, Roosevelt's program was composed of short-term measures created to alleviate immediate suffering, long-term programs aimed to strengthen the economy, and permanent structures meant to prevent repeated occurrence of depression in the future. The main thrust of the New Deal was Roosevelt's belief that the government should become the positive force for the American public who have become pessimistic people. Thus, Roosevelt and his administration worked toward a centralized economic planning to solve some of the problems associated with depression. Roosevelt led the government in providing direct relief to alleviate the distress of the American people. In addition, the New Deal proposed economic policies to revitalize mass-consumption. Roosevelt believed that one of the factors of great depression was overproduction. Thus, in creating the New Deal, Roosevelt and his economic advisors put emphasis on restoring American public consumption by revitalizing the masses ability to consume.

With the entire nation supporting him, Roosevelt was able to lead America out of depression and into a good hope. Indeed, the citizens of America were ready for a change and Roosevelt was more than willing to lead the nation out of the great depression and into a new path of economic recovery and progress.

However, Roosevelt's New Deal failed to improve the lifestyle and uplift the social conditions of the African Americans. The New Deal was able to create new businesses and business tycoons but it failed to address the farming and agricultural issues involving African Americans. While the New Deal allows the African Americans to receive at least 10% of welfare assistance payments, the New Deal did not attempt to address racial segregation or change the prevailing second-class political status of African-Americans. Nonetheless, Roosevelt appointed an unprecedented number of African-Americans to second-level positions in his administration. The Roosevelt administration worked together to welcome Black political organizations that made the transition from the GOP to the Democratic party in 1934-36. Furthermore, government agencies were established to ensure that relief programs allocated 20% of their budget. They operated separate all-black units with the same pay and conditions as white units. The African American community responded favorably to these socio-economic changes.

Roosevelt believed that there are more pressing concern than racial discrimination and racial segregation., he continues to support of Southern Congressional Democrats. Roosevelt declined to support legislation declaring lynching as a federal crime yet he continues to talk about it. Roosevelt's attitude is a manifestation of the socio-economic conditions of African Americans. Although slavery has been abolish and new livelihood opportunities are provided, the African-Americans remain isolated. They were freed from slavery yet they were never fully encompassed or welcomed into the mainstream American Society. The New Deal may have provided economic status and belonging of the African-Americans but it fail to address the issues of racial segregation and racial discrimination. The failure of the New Deal to address the issues of racial segregation and racial discrimination has resulted to the racism which African-Americans are subjected too.

## References

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