

Unit 8: Notes 1 - The Roaring Twenties

- Americans Struggle with Postwar Issues
 - Postwar Trends
 - WWI had left much of the American public exhausted
 - The debate over the League of Nations had deeply divided America
 - Several other changes occurred:
 - Changes in American life
 - Economy
 - Returning soldiers
 - Faced unemployment or took their old jobs away from women and minorities
 - A wave of **nativism**
 - *Prejudice against foreign born people*
 - Swept the nation
 - So too did a belief of **isolationism**
 - *A policy of pulling away from involvement in world affairs*
 - Fear of Communism
 - **Communism**
 - *An economic and political system based on a single party government ruled by a dictatorship*
 - The panic in the US began in 1919 after revolutionaries in Russia overthrew the czarist regime = Red Scare
 - A communist party formed in the United States
 - 70,000 radicals joined the group
 - **Palmer Raids**
 - In 1919, Palmer and Hoover *hunted down suspected Communist, socialist and anarchists*
 - *They trampled people's civil rights, invading private homes and offices and jailing suspects without allowing them legal counsel*
 - *Hundred of foreign born radicals were deported without trials*
 - Limiting Immigration
 - During the wave of nativist, "Keep America for Americans" became the prevailing attitude
 - Anti-immigrant attitudes had been growing in the US ever since the 1880s when new immigrants began arriving from southern and eastern Europe
 - The Klan Rises Again

- As a result of the Red Scare and anti-immigrant feelings different groups of bigots used anti-communism as an excuse to harass any group unlike themselves
- One such group was the **Ku Klux Klan**
- The KKK was devoted to “100 percent Americanism”
- By 1924, the KKK membership reach 4.5 million “white male persons, native born gentile citizens”
- The KKK also believed in keeping blacks in their place, destroying saloons, opposing unions, driving Roman Catholics, Jews and foreign born people out of the country
- KKK members were paid to recruit new members into their world of secret rituals and racial violence
- The KKK dominated state politics in many states, by the end of the decade its criminal activity led to a decrease in power
- The Quota System
 - The Emergency Quota Act of 1921, set up the **quota system**
 - *Established the maximum number of people who could enter the US from each foreign country*
 - The goal of the system was to cut sharply European immigration to the US
 - This provision discriminated against people from eastern and southern Europe – mostly Roman Catholics and Jews – who had not started coming to the US in large numbers until after 1890
 - The law prohibited Japanese immigrants, causing much ill will between the two nations
 - National origins quota system did not apply to immigrants from the Western Hemisphere
- A Time of Labor Unrest
 - Another severe postwar conflict formed between labor and managements
 - During the war, the government would not allow workers to strike because nothing could interfere with the war effort
 - However 1919 saw more than 3,000 strike during which some 4 million workers walked off the job
 - The Boston Police Strike
 - Boston police had not been given a raise since the beginning of WWI
 - They had been denied the right to unionize
 - When representatives asked for a raise and were fired, the remaining policemen decided to strike

- Massachusetts governor, Coolidge said “There is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, anytime”
 - The strike ended but members were not allowed to return to work
 - New policemen were hired instead
- Labor Movement Loses Appeal
 - The 1920s hurt the labor movement badly
 - Union membership dropped from more than 5 million to around 3.5 million
 - Membership declined for several reason
 - Work force consisted of immigrants willing to work in poor conditions
 - Languages, unions had difficulty organizing them
 - Farmers who had migrated to cities to find factory jobs were used to relying on themselves
 - Most unions excluded African Americans
 - While America’s attitude toward unions was changing, so too was its faith in the presidency
- The Harding Presidency
 - Harding Struggles for Peace
 - After WWI problems surfaced relating to arms control, war debts and the reconstruction of war-torn countries
 - High Tariffs and Reparations
 - New conflicts arose when it came time for Britain and France to pay back the \$10 billion they had borrowed from America
 - They could do this in two ways
 - Selling goods to the US
 - By collecting reparations from Germany
 - Which Germany was unable to do at the time
 - When the US did not get its money they arranged a plan with Germany and be repaid with its own money
 - The plan was to loan Germany \$2.5 billion dollars to pay back Britain and France with annual payments on a fixed scale
 - Britain and France then paid back the US the money owed
 - Then the use would be repaid by Germany for the money they had to borrow to pay Britain and France

- Britain and France considered the US a miser for not paying a fair share of the cost of WWI
- Scandal Hits Harding's Administration
 - Harding's cabinet included the so called Ohio Gang
 - The president's poker playing cronies who would soon cause a great deal of embarrassment
 - These corrupt friends used their offices to become wealthy through graft
 - The Teapot Dome Scandal
 - The most spectacular example of corruption was the **Teapot Dome Scandal**
 - *The government had set aside oil-rich public lands at Teapot Dome, Wyoming for use by the US Navy*
 - *Secretary of the Interior at the time managed to get the oil reserves transferred from the navy to the Interior Department*
 - *Secretly leased the land to two private oil companies and received nearly \$400,000 in loans from the companies for the land*
 - Coolidge, a respected man of integrity, helped to restore people's faith in their government and in the republican party and becomes the next president
- The Business of America
 - The Young Airplane Industry
 - The airplane industry began as a mail carrying service for the US Post Office
 - Founded in 1927, Pan American Airways inaugurated the first transatlantic passenger flights
 - America's Standard of Living Soars
 - The years from 1920 to 1929 were prosperous ones for the US
 - Electrical Conveniences
 - Gasoline powered much of economic boom in the 1920s but the use of electricity also transformed the nation
 - It was possible to distribute electric power efficiently over longer distance, out even to suburbs
 - Most farms still lacked power
 - While well to do families used electric refrigerators, cooking ranges and toaster
 - These electrical appliances made the lives of housewives easier, freed them for other community and leisure activities and coincided with a growing trend of women working outside the home

- A Superficial Prosperity
 - During the 1920s, most American believed prosperity would go on forever
 - The average factory worker was producing 50% more at the end of the decade than at its start
 - Buying goods on credit
 - In addition to advertising, industry provided another solution to the problem of luring consumers to purchase the mountain of goods produced each years
 - Easy credit
 - **Installment Plan**
 - *Enabled people to buy goods over an extended period, without having to put down much money at the time of purchase*
 - Banks provided the money at low interest rates
- Still most Americans focused their attention on the present with little concern for the future