

**Politics of the Roaring Twenties****Section 1**

# Americans Struggle with Postwar Issues

**Terms and Names**

**nativism** Suspicion of foreign-born people

**isolationism** Pulling away from world affairs

**communism** An economic system that supports government control over property to create equality

**anarchists** People who opposed any form of government

**Sacco and Vanzetti** Immigrant anarchists accused of murder

**quota system** A system that established the maximum number of people who could enter the United States from each country

**John L. Lewis** President of the United Mine Workers

**Before You Read**

In the last section, you read about the end of the First World War. In this section, you will see how Americans adjusted to the end of the war.

**As You Read**

Use a chart to take notes on the aftereffects of World War I.

**POSTWAR TRENDS (Page 412)****How did World War I affect America?**

World War I left much of the American public divided about the League of Nations. The end of the war hurt the economy. Returning soldiers took jobs away from many women and minorities, or faced unemployment themselves. A wave of **nativism** and **isolationism** swept over America as people became suspicious of foreigners and wanted to pull away from world affairs.

1. What attitudes became prevalent in America after WWI?

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**FEAR OF COMMUNISM**

(Pages 413–414)

**Why did Americans fear communism?**

Americans saw **communism** as a threat to their way of life. Communism is an economic and political system that supports government control over property to create equality. Some communists said there should be only one political party: the Communist Party. Communists came to power in Russia through violent revolution.

World War I created economic and political problems in Russia. In 1917, the Russian czar, or emperor, stepped down. Later, a group of revolutionaries called

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Bolsheviks took power. Their leader was Vladimir I. Lenin. They established the world's first communist state. This new government called for worldwide revolution. Communist leaders wanted workers to seize political and economic power. They wanted to overthrow capitalism.

In the United States, about 70,000 people joined the Communist Party. Still, the ideas of the communists, or "Reds," frightened many people. A fear of communism, known as the "Red Scare," swept the nation.

Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer set up an agency in the Justice Department to arrest communists, socialists, and **anarchists**, who opposed all forms of government. (The agency later became the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or FBI.)

Palmer's agents trampled on people's civil rights. Many radicals were sent out of the country without trial. But Palmer found no evidence of a plot to overthrow the government. Many suffered because of abuses of power during the Red Scare. One case involved two Italian immigrants, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. **Sacco and Vanzetti** were arrested for robbery and murder in Massachusetts. They admitted they were anarchists. But they denied committing any crime. The case against them was weak. But they were convicted anyway. Many people protested the conviction. They believed it was based on a fear of foreigners. Sacco and Vanzetti were executed in 1927.

2. How did Americans show their fear of communism?

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**LIMITING IMMIGRATION**

(Pages 414–415)

**How did Americans show their Nativist feelings?**

Some Americans used the Red Scare as an excuse to act against any people who were different. For example, the Ku Klux Klan, which had threatened African Americans during Reconstruction, revived.

Now the Klan turned against blacks, Jews, Roman Catholics, immigrants, and union leaders. They used violence to keep these groups "in their place." The Klan briefly gained political power in several states.

As a result of nativism, or anti-immigrant feelings, Congress passed the Emergency Quota Act of 1921. It established a **quota system**. This set a limit on how many immigrants from each country could enter the United States every year. In 1924, a new quota limited immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe, mostly Jews and Roman Catholics.

The 1924 law also banned immigration from Japan. People from the Western Hemisphere still entered the United States in large numbers.

3. What was the quota system?

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**A TIME OF LABOR UNREST**

(Pages 417–418)

**What were the three major strikes of 1919?**

Strikes were not allowed during World War I because they might have hurt the war effort. But in 1919, three important strikes occurred.

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Boston police officers went on strike for a living wage. The cost of living had doubled since their last raise.

Massachusetts governor Calvin Coolidge used force to put down the strike.

A strike by steelworkers began at U.S. Steel Corporation. Workers demanded the right to join unions, which employers prohibited. In 1923, a report revealed the harsh conditions in steel mills. Public opinion turned against the steel companies, and workers were given an eight-hour day. But they still had no union.

A more successful strike was led by **John L. Lewis**, the president of the United Mine Workers. When Lewis's workers closed the coal mines, President Wilson tried to help to settle the dispute between the miners and mine owners. The miners got higher wages, but they did not get shorter hours.

In 1925, A. Philip Randolph founded the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, an African-American union of railroad workers. But few blacks belonged to other unions. Overall, the 1920s was a bad time for unions. Union membership declined from 5 million to 3.5 million for the following reasons: (1) immigrants were willing to work in poor conditions, (2) language barriers made organizing people difficult; (3) farmers who had migrated to cities were used to relying on themselves, and (4) most unions excluded African Americans.

4. Why did union membership decline?

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As you read this section, take notes to answer questions about postwar conditions in America and the fear of communism.

**After World War I, many Americans feared that Communists would take over the country.**

1. How did the Justice Department under A. Mitchell Palmer respond to this fear?	→	2. Why did Palmer eventually lose his standing with the American public?
3. How did the Ku Klux Klan respond to this fear?	→	4. Why did the Klan eventually lose popularity and membership?

**Public opinion turned against labor unions as many Americans came to believe that unions encouraged communism.**

5. Why was the strike by Boston police unpopular with the public?	→	6. Why did Massachusetts governor Calvin Coolidge become so popular?
7. Why was the strike at U.S. Steel unpopular?	→	8. How did President Wilson respond to the steel strike?