

World War I and the Home Front

- A) Examine each document.
- B) Explain what change is taking place during World War I on the homefront.
- C) Explain how the war started, accelerated or retarded this change and why?
- D) If you were a historian exploring this phenomena, what further information would you want to know?

A) The Impact of World War I on African Americans

Black Population in the United States in Rural and Urban Areas

| Year | Rural Pop. | % Rural | Urban Pop. | % Urban |
|------|-------------|---------|-------------|---------|
| 1900 | 6.7 million | 78% | 1.9 million | 22% |
| 1910 | 7.1 | 73% | 2.6 | 27% |
| 1920 | 6.8 | 66% | 3.5 | 34% |
| 1930 | 6.6 | 56% | 5.1 | 44% |

To the French Military Mission, August 7, 1918

"The increasing number of Negroes in the United States (about 15,000,000) would create for the white race in the Republic a menace of degeneracy were it not that an impassable gulf has been made between them. As this danger does not exist for the French race, the French public has become accustomed to treating the Negro with familiarity and indulgence. These are matters of grievous concern to the Americans. They consider them an affront to their national policy. They are afraid that contact with the French will inspire in black Americans aspirations which to them (the whites) appear intolerable....Although a citizen of the United States, the black man is regarded by the white American as an inferior being...."

The Crisis, May 1919, by W.E.B. DuBois

"Make way for Democracy! We saved it in France and by the great Jehovah, we will save it in the United States, or know the reason why."

The Tenth Annual Report of the NAACP for the Year 1919

....First and foremost among the objectives for 1920...

1. A vote for every Negro man and woman on the same terms as for white men and women.
2. An equal chance to acquire the kind of education that will enable the Negro everywhere wisely to use this vote.
3. A fair trial in the courts for all crimes....

B) The Impact of World War I on American Women

Carrie Chapman Catt Describes the Campaign for Suffrage

"To get the word male in effect out of the constitution cost the women of the country 52 years of pauseless campaign...; 56 campaigns of referenda to male voters; 480 campaigns to urge Legislatures to submit suffrage amendments to voters; ...30 campaigns to urge presidential party conventions to adopt women suffrage planks in party platforms; and 19 campaigns with 19 successive Congresses...."

Harriot Stanton Blatch Describes Women Workers

"The American woman is going over the top. Four hundred and more are busy on aeroplanes at the Curtiss works....The skill of the women staggers one. After a week or two they master the operations on the "turret", gauging and routing machines. The best worker on the "facing" machine is a woman."

Woodrow Wilson Addresses the U.S. Senate

"We have made partners of the women in this war; shall we admit them only to a partnership of suffering and sacrifice and toil and not to a partnership of privilege and right? This war could not have been fought,...if it had not been for the services of the women...wherever men have worked, and upon the very skirts and edges of battle itself."

C) The Impact of World War I on American Workers and Industries

| Year | Union Membership | Value of Coal | Tons of Steel |
|------|------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1910 | 2.1 million | \$469 million | 28.3 million tons |
| 1912 | 2.4 | \$518 | 34.0 |
| 1914 | 2.6 | \$493 | 25.6 |
| 1916 | 2.7 | \$665 | 46.7 |
| 1918 | 3.3 | \$1,492 | 49.0 |
| 1920 | 5.0 | \$2,130 | 46.1 |

D) The Impact of World War I on Immigrants to the United States

Magyar Tribune, A Hungarian Newspaper, 1917

"You must never forget that no one asked you to come to the United States. You came here on your own free will to make a better living and to save a few nickels for your old age. Do not get involved in arguments in public places. Do not take part in any political movement....In war, unity means strength."

German-American Loyalty, 1917

"As a German by birth it is a horrible calamity that I may have to fight Germans...But as an American by preference, I can see no other course open.

The German-American is as staunch as the American of adoption of any land and perhaps more so. Let us make war on Germany...with our whole heart and with all our strength."

Palmer Raids and the Red Scare, January, 1920

L.F. Post, Assistant Secretary of Labor:

"Meetings wide open to the general public were roughly broken up. All persons present -- citizens and aliens alike without discrimination -- were arbitrarily taken into custody and searched as if they had been burglars caught in the criminal act."

The New York Tribune, Jan. 3, 1920:

"All night long the process of questioning and sorting out the captives went on at the office of the Department of Justice....At midnight, Mr. Flynn said, 'This is the breaking of the backbone of radicalism in America!'"

Senator Thomas Walsh:

"Instances were not rare in which the victims were the fathers of families, including a number of children born in America, while sad to relate, not a few had enviable war records."

Of the 10,000 people arrested during the raids led by U.S. Attorney General Mitchell Palmer, 6,500 were released without any charges. Of the 3,500 charged, the vast majority were acquitted and freed.

Congress Discusses Immigration Restriction, 1921

Congressman Lucian Parish, Dem.-Texas:

"We should stop immigration entirely until such a time as we can amend our immigration laws and so write them that hereafter no one shall be admitted except he be in full sympathy with our constitution and laws.

"Now is the time to throw about this country the most stringent immigration laws and keep from our shores forever those who are not in sympathy with American ideas."

Congressman James McClintic, Dem.-Oklahoma:

"I say the class of immigrants coming to the shores of the United States at this time are not the kind of people we want as citizens in this country."

E) The Impact of World War I on Political Freedom

Statements by Eugene Debs during World War I

"I am not opposed to all war, nor am I opposed to fighting under all circumstances...When I say I am opposed to war, I mean ruling-class war, for the ruling class is the only class that makes war...But while I have not a drop of blood to shed for the oppressors of the working class and the robbers of the poor,...I have a heart-full to shed for their victims when it shall be needed in the war for their liberation. I am opposed to every war but one; I am for that war with heart and soul, and that is the world-wide war of the social revolution."

"I have read history. I know that it is the ruling classes that make war...and not the people. In all of the history of this world the people have never yet declared a war. Not one."

"War does not come by chance. War is not the result of accident. The war that began in Europe can readily be accounted for. For the last forty years, under this internationalist capitalist system, this exploiting system, these various nations of Europe have been preparing for the inevitable."

"I look upon the Espionage Law as a despotic enactment in flagrant conflict with democratic principles and with the spirit of free institutions..."

Eugene Debs was arrested in June, 1918 for violating the Espionage Act and was charged with Sedition. He was convicted and sentenced to ten years in prison.