

Reform movements



In the duration of time between the years 1825-1850, many reform movements were occurring as American citizens fought for the reformation of many laws and institutions. There was the temperance movement, aimed toward lessening alcohol consumption, and in extreme cases, the complete abolishment of it, and the women's rights movement that struggled with the task of equality for women in society and politics.

Prison and church reform were also popular causes as people observed the injustices in prisons and viewed certain churches with disdain while Americans sought a different salvation and turned to revivals and camp meetings. There were also the abolitionists and the utopians. The abolitionists found slavery to be inhumane and fought to rid America, especially the south, of human bondage forever. The utopians were people unsatisfied with America's normal society and as a result created their own societies where their ideals could be lived and taught.

In all of the reforms of 1825-1850, America's democratic ideals were reinforced and spread as people became involved in different activities. The two main abolitionist reforms were the abolition of slavery, and the women's rights movement. Social reforms in the antebellum era were critical to the expansion of democratic ideals. The temperance movement was based on the desire to create a productive and civilized society that could contribute more efficiently to the image of what a democratic family should be like.

This movement began in 1826 as the alcohol was becoming increasingly widespread, affecting the efficiency of labor. Document H illustrates the detrimental effect that alcohol had on the life of the common laborer. In

1851, a law was passed which banned alcohol. This law not only protected women and children physically due to a decrease in abuse, it also supported the democratic principle that every man was equal and productive in his own right, as long as the government protected them from immoralities.

Many other social reforms occurred throughout the country between 1825 and 1850. This period of revivalism and philosophical motivation for reform started a chain of reform movements, such as utopian communities, moral reforms, education, temperance, abolition, and women's rights, encouraging democratic ideals. In the years 1840-1850, numerous Utopian communities were created in order to test reform theories. Utopian communities emphasized industrialization, mutual support, cooperation, and spiritual improvement.

In these social groups, sexuality was not an important matter; both men and women are equal among these societies. In the period from 1825-1850, a majority of the reform movements in the United States sought to expand democratic ideals. However, although many triumphed, many had to face obstacles set others back. In conclusion, however many setbacks and "nativists" who tried to hold back these democratic reforms, the movements of 1825-1850 reinforced the democratic ideals which hold our nation today.