

How world war one changed us society essay

Countries, United States



How World War One changed United States Society

Early 1900s was a time of great changes in the United States. At the time, United States was considered the world leader because the country was changing rapidly. This was the progressive era when United States became highly industrialized. People from all over the world moved to the country because of the better opportunities available there. United States implemented the isolation policy prior to world war one. The country did not want to be involved in any war at the time. However, circumstances forced the country to get to the war in 1917. This brought unprecedented political, economic and social changes in the United States.

During the world war one, United States business men in the sector of ammunitions and other goods used in war gained a lot. European countries purchased many goods for the war including guns, ammunition and other equipment. This economic boom had started in 1915 when the war was gaining momentum in Europe. Two years in the economic boom, United States was forced to join the war by circumstances. This presented a great challenge to all people in the United States. 1

Since the United States was the supplier of most equipment used in the War, war equipment manufacturers had an added burden; supplying their own government with war equipment. This rise in demand presented a challenge to the manufacturers; they could not cope with the high demands at the time. With the realization that equipment business was very profitable, more people ventured in to the business. At the same time, other industrialists in

the field were thinking of the way they could manufacture these goods fast to cope with the high demand. New manufacturing techniques were devised.

With the high demand, more people were employed in these industries. This was an approach used by the industries to boost equipment production. Most of the people that would have been employed in the industries were not available at the time. During that period, American men dominated in these industries. Immigrants and women were rarely employed before the war. However, things changed drastically during the War. Most American men were sent to War after America joined the War in 1917. Industries needed labour whether men were available or not because they could not afford to lose on the then profitable business. Industries were desperate for workers and did what was unimaginable at the time; employing women and immigrants. 2

Women and immigrants were employed in these industries as soon as America joined the war. American government had no option but to allow women and immigrants to be employed in these industries. Furthermore, the government was also benefitting from the sale of war equipment through taxes and other tariffs. At the same time, most families were left without breadwinners and women left had to look for alternative ways of providing for their families. Women went to look for employment at the industries and since most industries were looking for workers, they were employed. 3

Women and immigrants were also recruited as support staff to men at war. Some women worked as telephone operators, entertainers and nurses. American government had actually considered to enlist women to the army

during the war. This proposal had been made because it was not known when the war would end. These plans were never heard of after the war ended. When the war came to an end in November 1918, things in the United States became totally different. American social, economic and political life was overturned.

Most families were yet to come to terms with losing either family members or friends. Many soldiers died in the war and families were left without breadwinners making the situation even worse. American economy was in recession before the war and was held together by the booming war equipment business. Therefore, when the war ended, things became much worse than before the war. Industries that were functioning before and during the war collapsed and many people were fired. The government at the time was in no capacity to support these industries. The recession that surfaced after the war led to limited governmental resources which made it hard for the government to support these industries. 4

Considering these factors, the government had no alternative and had to watch these industries crumble. This meant that most people had to be laid off from the industries. Families who lost their members in the War were devastated because they did not have fathers to provide for the families. Some families were left with nothing including houses making life very challenging.

Although the United States fought for only seven months in the Great War, her economy developed a vulnerable point such that if something came right across the point, then the economy would just collapse. American

government is said to have spent more than three times the tax collections leaving a large dent in the economy. This brought about many challenges in America and the ripples of these effects were felt in the 1920s. In fact, this was the reason why the government could not be able to support industries after the war. 5

It was very tough for most Americans because most people were not employed and the situation was becoming worse. More and more people were losing jobs and American social structure was becoming devastated. Most people could not be able to cope with the challenges of the time. These factors affected every American field including banks, mining sector, construction and other important parts of the economy. Banks collapsed at the rate of over six hundred a year. Farmland reduced and construction business reduced greatly. America became very depressed economically and these ripples led to the great Depression of 1929. 6

Involvement of United States in the Great War may have been a bad idea but the activities of the time held the economy together. America supplied most of the equipment used in World War One gained greatly from it submerging the recession that was there before the War. Most men were at War and since industries desperately needed workers, women and immigrants were employed. When the war ended, recession surfaced and the American government was in no position to keep adverse economic consequences at bay. The events that took place in the 1920s were influenced by what had happened and eventually led to the great depression. If world one never

happened, America would not have undergone through great depression but recession would have persisted.

End notes

1 Foner, Eric. Give Me Liberty! An American History. 2nd Edition. New: York. W. W. Norton & Co., 2008

2 Foner, Eric. Give Me Liberty! An American History. 2nd Edition. New: York. W. W. Norton & Co., 2008

3 Joshua, Goldstein. War and Gender: How Gender shapes the war system and vice versa. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

4 Foner, Eric. Give Me Liberty! An American History. 2nd Edition. New: York. W. W. Norton & Co., 2008

5 Joshua, Goldstein. War and Gender: How Gender shapes the war system and vice versa. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

6 Foner, Eric. Give Me Liberty! An American History. 2nd Edition. New: York. W. W. Norton & Co., 2008.

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