

Historical problems



Woodrow Wilson has been described as “ cold, aloof and often arrogant, but he was not all intellect. ” By the time Wilson was elected governor of New Jersey he had never held a political office, and had never taken more than a theorist’s interest in politics. Wilson’s personal view on how the Presidential office should be run is to lead a country rather than to be lead. He believed that a president should act like a prime minister and not be isolated from Congress.

Wilson himself dreamed of a utopian society and amongst his intellectual supporters believed that this “ most terrible and disastrous wars” could be countenanced only by perceiving of it as the harbinger of eternal peace. The utopian spirit of the war took concrete form in Wilson’s proposal of a postwar federation of nations, in itself not a utopian scheme but one which, from the first, was freighted with utopian aspirations. Though Wilson may have been an effective war president by delegating responsibilities to those qualified his aspirations for a perfect world and his sentiments of “ peace without victory” obscured his reality.

President Wilson presented his ideas for peace in his famous Fourteen Points address on January 8, 1918. Wilson’s chief goal was to have the treaty provide for the formation of a League of Nations. He hoped that the threat of economic or military punishment from League members, including Germany, would prevent future wars. Though Wilson held a prominent role in drafting the Treaty of Versailles, and would later receive the Nobel Peace Prize for, the other major Allies, however, had little interest in honoring either Wilson’s Fourteen Points or all hisgoalsfor the League of Nations.

The allies had suffered far greater losses and wanted to punish Germany severely. Strong opposition to the treaty developed in the United States. Many Americans disagreed with Wilson's generous approach to worn-torn Europe. Republicans objected to U. S. commitments to the League of Nations. The U. S. Senate refused to approve the treaty. Also blocking the passage of the League of Nations was the personal and political conflicts between Wilson and Henry Cabot Lodge. Lodge, who was then the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, insisted the specific and limiting changes be made to protect U. S. interests. Wilson would not compromise. Unable and perhaps unwilling to reach an agreement with Wilson, Lodge used his power and position to ensure the defeat of the treaty—and prevent American participation in the League of Nations. As to whether or not the postwar would have been different if the United States had accepted and entered the League of Nations, it is unlikely. America's refusal to join the League, fitted in with her desire to have an isolationist policy throughout the world.

Therefore, the League had a final ideal - to end war for good. However, if an aggressor nation was determined enough to ignore the League's verbal warnings, all the League could do was enforce economic sanctions and hope these worked as it had no chance of enforcing its decisions using military might. Postwar 1920 brought many radical changes to Americans by the advancement in technology, discoveries, and inventions. Pop culture during the 1920's was characterized by the flapper, automobiles, nightclubs, movies, and jazz.

Life moved fast as a new sense of prosperity and freedom emerged at the end of World War 1. The 1920's gave American's radio, films, advertisements, and new literature to ponder. 1915 gave us a movie milestone in *The Birth of a Nation*, produced by D. W. Griffith. American's were also given notable authors as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Booth Tarkington, Ernest Hemingway, and Sinclair Lewis. Authors of this period struggled to understand the changes occurring in society. While some writers praised the changes others expressed disappointment in the passing of old ways.

But not before the printing press had American's been brought together by shrinking the distances between people and homes. " Of all the new products put on the market during the decade, none met with more spectacular success than the radio. " The radio brought into American homes commercials, stories, news, music, sports, and advertisement. Improvements in radio broadcasting and radio manufacturing itself quickly became a big business. Along with the increasing availability of free-home entertainment it created a soaring demand for radios.

The 1920's were wrought with many issues of cultural conflict, prejudices, nativism, and moral policing. Widespread abuse of alcohol had been recognized as a serious social problem since the colonial days, in rural America as well as in cities, and " demon rum" had been long condemned from many Protestant pulpits during the 1920's. Prohibition was the government's solution to protect women, children, and families from the effects of abuse of alcohol, in other words, moral policing.

Another example of moral policing today can be found in the controversial topic of legalizing marijuana. " Conversely, their omission in the present

debate reflects the unfortunate reality that marijuana prohibition is perpetuated not by science, but rather by emotion and rhetoric. " The topic of nativism can be shown in three primary issues: immigration restriction, the KKK, and the cases of Sacco and Vanzetti. The old culture was generally anti-immigrant and tended to blame many of the problems of urban industrial America on immigrants.

During the 1920's the old culture, which was extremely nativist in attitude, was able to pass several immigration restriction laws which both lowered the number of immigrants to the U. S. and limited the numbers immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, which the old culture was particularly against. They did this through the quota system, set up in the Emergency Immigration Act of 1921 (and the revised with the 1924 National Origins Act) which established a certain number of immigrants from each country to be allowed into the U.

S. per year. Each country's quota was based on a percentage (3%) of people of that nation in the U. S. in the base year of (1910). The " rebirth" of the KKK was another sign of the nativism of the 1920's as this " new" KKK was not only black, but also anti-Jewish, anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant. So have Americans learned their lesson from the 1920's and have they changed their attitudes concerning nativism, moral policing, and are we still considered a prejudice country?

In the year 2011, do Americans still consider them as being progressive and that they refuse to repeat history? Nativism and prejudices can still be felt and seen throughout the United States. Our country is still debating nativism in the current situation with illegal immigrants. Newspapers, television

shows, the radio, and internet are covered in stories of immigration policies. Our country is still swarmed with prejudices between races, religions, and lifestyles. It is our history to repeat and forget our past mistakes.

As stated before, the 1920's brought many radical changes to America with the advancement in technology, discoveries, and inventions. Pop culture in the 1920's was characterized by the flapper, automobiles, nightclubs, movies, and music. Life moved fast as a new sense of prosperity and freedom emerged at the end of World War I. In many ways our current era is like that of the 1920's. Our society is now connected to each other via the internet, and Facebook. On the spot news is even better now with television and radio and better yet the cell phone.

Society is overrun with the most current, up-to-date news, even if no one cares what reading or hearing about. We are still a drug crazed and alcohol abusing society with fast cars, outrageous clothes and hairstyles. It just may be that we are going at a faster pace than those in the 1920's. What can be seen differently is that maybe our morals have diminished in some aspects of society. Not that all society can be defined as a whole, as there are still those in our current society and those of the 1920's that still and did value selfrespect, morals, God, and country.

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