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Politics, President



Jonathan 9 10 December 2012 History 110 Final Essay Many of the effective lessons people have learned over time are from mistakes we have made; these errors of the past will lead to wisdom and success in the future. Over the course of United States' history, there have been many successes and many failures. As an advisor to you Mr. President, I want to discuss how several events have influenced our corporate structure as well as the economic, and civil impacts of these events. At the foundation of it all, the Second Industrial Revolution further advanced our new country. The Second Industrial Revolution (1871-1914) saw new inventions set a precedent of great things to come. There was the introduction of the telephone, electricity, machinery and the transcontinental railroad. These three inventions were vital in vaulting us from fourth in the world in production in 1865 at \$2 billion, to first by 1900 at \$13 billion. The railroads enabled commerce to be completed throughout the entire country and allowed for goods to be distributed quicker than ever before. As this new industry grew, so did the desire to find people to operate, maintain and continue to grow it. In order for these new industries to grow, production had to become innovative. Factory machinery replaced many of the individual laborers. Sure there were always things that can or should be done by hand, but it seemed necessary to implement a machine that could produce 7, 000 units per hours rather than 3, 000 units per day by human labor. Machines allowed for quicker production of goods but also resulted in economies of scale. By producing goods at a much greater rate, businesses were now able to sell and distribute increased amounts at a lower price. In the case of Andrew Carnegie, these lower costs were reflected in the working conditions and

wages of his workers. As factory work began to streamline, the need for skilled workers decreased. Many immigrants from Europe and Asia took unskilled jobs in flourishing industries such as meat packing, clothing and textiles and mining. New, faster machinery made many human skills obsolete and allowed for the transition to unskilled workers who were trained to complete one task along the manufacturing process. Innovation continued and so did the work force. The expansion offered opportunities for women, blacks, whites and some immigrants, to enter into the workforce. Immigrant women took positions where there was little technology used and white women transitioned to clerical and sales positions. " At the turn of the century, 8.6 million women worked outside of their homes—nearly triple the number in 1870" (Faragher 533). The exclusion of immigrants from work and the poor and unhealthy working conditions lead to the creation of Labor unions for fairness in the workplace. The AFL, American Federation of Labor, fought for employees to have better working conditions, higher wages and shorter working hours. This was great except for the fact that the AFL president, Samuel Gompers, wanted to eliminate women and unskilled immigrants from the workforce. Although the AFL did not fight for equality for all workers, it was an initial step in the correct direction. The most critical parts about the Second Industrial Revolution were that innovation and invention were the key to progressing. Our nation needed to continue to advance and continue to work smarter and more efficiently, not necessarily harder. As manufacturing work became more sophisticated, the need to continue to encourage businesses to invest in the skills of their workers and have wages to back up their skills became a key bargaining topic. Allowing

businesses to reinvest in their company and invest in their workers will be far more productive in the long run. Over the course of United States history many movements have come and gone. During the late 19th century, farmers and workers assembled a mass movement to challenge the bipartisan political system—Populism. The main agenda of the Populists was to restore power into the hands of the working people. It is my personal opinion Mr. President, that some of our hardest workers have been our farmers. These are the same people that live dangerously close to the poverty line and are constantly forced to produce more, at a faster rate and at a lower cost. It was in 1892 that representatives some several organizations—Farmers’ Alliance, Knights of Labor and the Colored Farmers’ Alliance—met asking for the government owned railroads, banks, a graduated income tax, 8-hour work days and warehouses to store their crops until prices reached acceptable levels. Farmers needed to maintain some margin for their sales in order to keep incentive for them to do their work. However, in 1893, the nation was struck with a depression. European nations had been economically declining and the market for imports/exports manufactured by the United States also began to decrease. As financial panic set in, so did the effects of tighter credit, falling agriculture prices and a weakening banking system; Many of these issues are ones we have been experiencing in the last 4 years. With an estimated 25% unemployment in some cities and nearly 3 million nationwide, Sechler Coxey gather masses of people and marched on Washington demanding that the government set up public works programs and find ways to create jobs for the unemployed. Similar to workers in the Second Industrial Revolution, workers and farmers during the Populist era

wanted to have adequate conditions. They sought for better working conditions and to not be taken advantage of by big corporations with a plethora of power. A constant theme is arising here Mr. President, that our workers, the people that drive our nation and economy, want to be treated equally and with respect. It is my opinion that working conditions need to be up to par and jobs need to be easier to access. This is a similar issue to one we have experience recently with the growing unemployment rate. Mr. President, it is great that you have implemented Work for America programs and have put many Americans back to work. My suggestion would be to allow many of our corporations to act with expansionary ideas rather than increase their taxes and cause them to contract. I understand many of the contraction business has done has been as a result of our economy and the decline of the housing market, but wouldn't it make more sense to have a short term break to create incentive for corporations and large businesses to expand and employ a greater amount of people? It is my personal opinion that this would greatly reduce our unemployment rates and further expand our economy. Wars have always had a profound impact on global economies and the overall wellbeing of the people involved. This was the case during World War I (1914-1918) as the United States saw changes to its labor force and a country dedicating many of its resources to war. As WWI began, the US held a position of neutrality yet still engaged in active trade with the Allied nations. In 1914 trade with Allies was around 800 million; by 1916 trade had risen to 3.2 billion. During this time, corporate manufacturers saw a boom in their sales as a result of dedicating more resources towards the war effort. Although I am not advocating being actively involved in wars, this

event did help the economy by putting more people to work. As the demand for labor increased due to the war effort, the necessity for additional laborers and an expanded work force increased as well. Unfortunately, the war, combined with a decline in immigration from European countries at war, led to a shortage. Many women who were formerly involved in low paying domestic service jobs were now joining war manufacturing and enjoying higher wages as well. This also marked the first time in history that women joined the military. This prompted the Labor Department to introduce Women in Industry Service, an organization designed to educate employers on standards of treatment for women in the workplace. Introducing more women into the workforce ultimately led to a widespread movement for women's suffrage as well. One of the biggest advancements in civil liberties during this was the passing of the 19th amendment granting women the right to vote. Allowing half our population the right to vote was not only necessary but the right thing to do. " Carrie Chapman Catt used the president's (Wilson) war rhetoric as an argument for granting the vote to women. The fight for democracy, she argued, must begin at home, and she urged the passage of the woman suffrage amendment as a war measure. " Mr. President, as women make up slightly more than 50% of our population, they are a vital asset to the success and progress of our great nation just as others who are fighting for equality are an asset. Today, we face another issue which has limited the rights of people who are gay or lesbian. Just like with women's suffrage, equal rights for gays is opposed by many. We have fought for the rights of many people including the mass of immigrants who have made our country what it is today. There is no reason that we should

deprive our own citizens to same rights as others simply for their sexual orientation. I understand that we will have formidable opposition but these will be the same people who opposed rights for African-Americans, immigrants and women previously. To piggy back off of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, no person should be discriminated against with respect to race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. I believe that it is time we add sexual orientation to this list. Gay people should be able to get married and be just as happy or unhappy as a heterosexual couple. During the time considered to be the "roaring twenties", there are signs to point out why we had such a great economic collapse which we regard today as the Great Depression. Although a difficult and terrible time, there were many good things that ultimately came from the Great Depression which came out in the First New Deal. Some of the major discrepancies came with the increased efficiency in production and the wages in which workers received. "From 1923-1929, manufacturing output increased by 32%, whereas wages rose by 8%." New industries also saw higher wages for their laborers such as autos and electrical while older industries such as textiles and mining saw little to no wage increases. Families still earned similar amounts of money as previously, but more money was now being spent on new gadgets such as cars, telephones, and radios. This ultimately left many families with little savings and widespread economic insecurity. As stock prices began to become more inflated, people began to buy into the stock market. The desire to buy these stocks introduced new ways of investing as well. Buying on margin became a new way to purchase and allowed for investors, who did not possess all of the necessary capital, to put as little as a 10% down

payment for ownership and put the stock up as collateral against the loan. Credit was easy and money was plentiful for brokers. Corporations began to invest excess capital with brokers rather than reinvest within the company finding that it would deliver a greater yield. It is all too eerie that we saw big corporations become too creative with their money which contributed to our most recent crash in 2007-2008. In 1929, the market peaked in September and a rapid decrease saw over \$30 billion in worth drop by mid-November. Agriculture prices dropped over 80% from 1929-1933 and unemployment reached record highs at nearly 25%. Drastic measures needed to be taken to restore confidence to our citizens and employment. Once again, issues that we have experience over the past few years as well. In 1932, the election of FDR brought about many new changes to restore our economy. From March to June of 1933, FDR implemented The Hundred Days. Relief programs were put into effect to aid people, their families and the widespread unemployment problems. One of which was the Civilian Conservation Corps which provided work for jobless young men having them protect the nations natural resources, doing road construction, reforestation and flood control to name a few. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration was implemented to aid farmers and set price floors at adequate levels experienced during prosperous years leading up to WWI. These programs, along with more resources and employment dedicated to WWII in the 1940's, helped to lift us out of the economic depression. In addition to these programs which provided jobs there were also ones to encourage consumer spending; many of which follow similar concepts which we have already implemented in the past few years Mr. President. It is important for our government to provide

ways in which people can earn income and provide something for the good of our society. It is my belief that we have too many people these days who want to simply receive a hand out rather than have to work hard as people had done in previous years. By no means do I suggest that we remove entitlement programs as they benefit far too many people, but we need to implement duration restrictions for these programs and invest more money into programs which train, teach and provide outlets for people to gain employment once their entitlement money is concluded. It seems unfair that the middle class continues to get hit harder each year to pay for things that our entire nation uses. It may be farfetched, but a simple flat tax on high income earners of \$200, 000+ at a reasonable rate would be more effective than a greater rate in which people do their best to find every loop hole possible. Throughout the 20th century, information became easier to access and more readily available. The invention of the telephone, radio and television allowed for information to be transmitted at rates that hadn't been seen before. The age of information allowed for several advancements. After WWII, people seeking a college education ramped up to all-time highs. The number of students nationwide increased by over 800, 000 between 1950 and 1960 and more than doubled from 3. 2 million to 7. 5 million by 1970. The emergence of an increased educated class of people advanced the amount of the middle class. White collar jobs became more prevalent and the information for these positions followed. Channels of communication became revolutionized with the introduction of the television. By 1960, nearly 90% of families owned a television which was operated for an average of five hours per day. The television changed the way people interacted

within the home and created a new industry of buying and selling consumer goods. Children were given role models and heroes to look up to while adults had easy access to news and sporting events. As tv progressed, the shows on air seemed to emulate the actions of a typical suburban household.

Shows such as Father Knows Best and Leave it to Beaver exemplified how traditional post-war families were to interact. Political debates began to be aired starting with the election between Kennedy and Nixon in 1960.

Although not readily accessible to the public until the 1990's, the internet could be one of the most revolutionary ideas ever. The internet provided the largest amount of information to be accessed at the fastest rates ever. Along with the popularity of the PC computer, ideas, beliefs, research and just about anything else could be shared with one simple click. As we have seen recently, revolutionaries in other nations have used the internet and our social media tools to spread the word of their discontent with their nation's current standing. Never before have people been able to rally this quickly and never have they included the mass amount that they do today. All of which is possible because of the internet—a tool which we see expanding each year.

Mr. President, the internet has turned into an essential tool for the entire world. We have used this to further our government intelligence and capture people who are the greatest threat to our nation. We need to ensure that not only the citizens of our nation, but the citizens of other nations have the same ability to access this endless encyclopedia of information and are not subject to censorship. We have done great things by lifting country blockades of internet access especially when those same countries are going through turmoil domestically. It is vital for the advancement of our

information that we allow the channels to remain open and free for access.

Mr. President, as we have gone through several historical situations, we have seen how these affect our people, economy and country as a whole. It is pivotal to that we learn from our mistakes of the past, and understand what reforms and actions have worked well and how we can replicate them if need be. Through hard work and incentive to innovate, the people before us have set up this great country today. It is now on us to continue to progress so the next generation of young Americans can perpetuate the success we have already had. Bibliography John Mack Faragher, Mari Jo Buhle, Daniel Czitrom, Susan h. Armitage. *Out of Many: A History of the American People*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2012.