

Week2 dq's



The Rise and Fall of McCarthyism Joe McCarthy was a conservative Republican from Wisconsin who became known for his staunch anti-communist crusade during the early 1950s. McCarthy was schooled in law and a veteran of World War II when he was elected to the US Senate in 1947. Within 3 years he gave his infamous speech proclaiming that the US government was infested with communist spies at the highest levels. His fierce contentions included his often cited quote where he announces, " I have here in my hand a list of 205 [. . .] members of the Communist Party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping policy in the State Department" (Dimkova, 2001, p. 7). McCarthy further contended that radio, television, the media, and industry were under the control of communist influence. This initiated a four-year investigation into the government, the US Army, and the media.

McCarthy's initial accusations were met with a public that was receptive to his viewpoint due to the escalating Cold War and the fear of a nuclear capable Soviet Union. His anti-communist portrayals were often loosely based on facts, and there was a substantial effort by the USSR to infiltrate America and spy on our defense industries. However, this public acceptance soon waned as he targeted devoted military personnel and well known members of the media. His flamboyant approach and outrageous claims gained him a negative reputation as being divisive as many of his claims proved to be unwarranted.

Civil Rights: Tackling the Problems and Confronting the Obstacles

The civil rights movement of the 1950s had its roots 3 centuries earlier as slaves struggled to gain their freedom throughout America's history. World War II had brought greater public attention to the issue through the advent

of mass communications and the country's confrontation with the reality of supporting the same racist policies that Americans, including African Americans, had fought against in Nazi Germany. With the war behind them Americans were ready to turn their attention to their internal social injustices. On June 26, 1948 President Truman signed Executive Order 9981, which outlawed discrimination and segregation in the Armed Forces based on race (Desegregation in the Armed Forces, n. d). This action set the stage for the escalation of the growing civil rights movement.

The massive demonstrations and protests of the 1950s resulted in the signing of the Civil Rights bill in 1964. While it gave federal protection to minorities against discrimination, it could do little to eliminate the de facto prejudice that existed in America. The historic legislation opened the doors to education, housing, and employment opportunities. However, it was not capable of immediately rectifying the centuries of economic disparity between the races. Affirmative action has attempted to be pro-active in this area, but has met with conservative resistance who labels it reverse discrimination. Though the African American community has made great strides in the last 50 years, there is still a wide gap in education and income levels between blacks and whites in America.

References

Desegregation in the Armed Forces (n. d.). Retrieved October 31, 2007, from [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/desegregation/large/index.php?action=](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/desegregation/large/index.php?action=chronology)

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