

SSUSH15 – Analyze the origins and impact of U.S. involvement in World War I

b. Explain the domestic impact of World War I, including the origins of the Great Migration, the Espionage Act, and socialist Eugene Debs.

World War I impacted Americans in a number of ways. The war increased the power of the Federal government and changed the demography of the United States. America was impacted economically, politically, and socially by the nation's involvement in World War I.

The Wilson administration moved to centrally organize the United States' economy during World War I with the creation of a series of wartime boards. These boards oversaw production in factories, mediated labor disputes, and improved railroad operations. The private businesses were managed more closely by the government during the war in order to ensure domestic production met the military needs. To finance the war, the United States borrowed from the American people by selling Liberty Bonds. These bonds accounted for two-thirds of the war's cost. In addition to borrowing, the United States also increased income and excise taxes.

President Wilson was correct in his assessment of the American people when he said every man would pay a penalty for non-conformity. In June 1917, at the request of the Wilson administration, Congress passed the Espionage Act. The law provided penalties for spying, sabotage, and obstructing the war effort. The law also banned the use of the United States Mail to send anti-war materials. On June 30, 1918 Eugene Debs was arrested after making a series of speeches against the war urging American men not to fight. He was a prominent Socialist, four-time candidate for the presidency, and union leader. The courts convicted Debs under the Espionage Act and sentenced him to 10 years in prison. He was also permanently disenfranchised. The Supreme Court later upheld Debs' conviction after a series of appeals. President Harding commuted Debs' sentence after he served three years in federal prison. During his time in prison, Debs continued his bid as a Socialist candidate for the White House.

Another impact World War I had on the United States was the shift in population demographics. The migration of Blacks from the South to the North actually began before World War I, as families sought to escape sharecropping and Jim Crow violence. However, the trend accelerated during the war years and was known as the Great Migration. One factor that prompted the population shift was that defense manufacturing jobs became available in the North as soldiers were drafted to serve in the war. Prior to the war, northern factory owners preferred immigrant workers. They typically only used Blacks as strike-breakers. The war temporarily ended immigration and opened new opportunities for Blacks. During the period, 1.5 million Blacks from the South moved to Northern cities. During the 1910s and 1920s, Chicago's Black population grew by 148 percent; Cleveland's by 307 percent; Detroit's by 611 percent.

Define

Great Migration

Espionage Act

Eugene Debs

- 1. How did the Great Migration impact the U.S.?**
- 2. Why did African Americans move north?**
- 3. How did the Espionage Act impact the U.S.?**
- 4. How did the socialist Eugene Debs have an impact on the U.S.?**
- 5. Why was Eugene Debs arrested?**