Chapter 19 section 1

Notes American Society

By the summer of 1946 10 million returning from the military (almost all men, a few women)

GI Bill of Rights -- aka the Serviceman’s Readjustment act

Paid part of tuition for GI’s for school

Year of unemployment benefits for job hunting

Low interest loans for homes, farms, businesses

Housing crisis – 45/46 returning vets lived with family or in cramped quarters

Levitt and Kaiser assembly line manufacture – mass produced houses – can build one in 16 minutes/ $7000

Suburbs – Levittowns. Open spaces, new communities

Changing roles for the family

8 million women go to work during the war – ran the family, managed the house – tensions between returning spouses cause the divorce rate to rise

one million war marriages end in divorce

Economic readjustment – cancel 35m in war contracts, 3m unemployed at peak,

Wartime price controls are removed June 1946 – prices soar, it takes two years for supplies of consumer goods to meet demand, congress re-est. Price controls on price wages, and rents

Recovery looks like….. people who predicted a depression didn’t consider the pent consumer demands after four years of war….$135b in savings and an urge to spend meant the economy is rolling again – demand is greater than supply so many jobs are created as industry struggles to keep up.

Cold war get things going too

Military spending – rearming to fight the soviets

Marshall Plan -- creates a market for American goods

MEETING ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

President Trumans inheritance – rising communist threat, strikes for higher wages, rising prices – steelworkers, coal miners, railroad workers all strike. HST goes to Congress and asks for the power to draft striking workers into the army – unions cave.

1946 midterm elections – “Had enough?” GOP slogan, they win both houses of Congress – this completely derails Truman’s domestic agenda – and Taft Hartley Act takes back much of the gains made by organized labor / unions

SOCIAL UNREST PERSISTS

Returning soldiers are not shy about demanding their rights – especially in the South this results in unrest.

HST is a fan of civil rights. 1946 President’s Commission on Civil Rights -- federal anti-lynching law, ban on poll taxes, est a permanent civil rights commission.

Congress won’t cooperate – won’t desegregate the armed services, HST does it by executive order july 1948, also orders an end to discrimination in hiring federal employees -- the supreme court rules that lower courts can’t bar minorities from residential neighborhoods – the federal government steps up to fight for civil rights

1948 ELECTION

GOP figures it’s a cakewalk. Nominates Dewey. Henry Wallace forms a more liberal Progressive Party, Strom Thurmond runs on a platform of States’ Rights (read that as: feds can’t tell us what to do about our negroes) – Dixiecrats – Truman hits the road and states his case that he couldn’t accomplish anything with the GOP congress sabotaging everything he tried to do. “do nothing 80th Congress”

The experts all think Dewey has it in the bag. Truman wins by 2m votes. 82503497

Truman’s Fair Deal is an economic program that extends the Fair Deal of FDR—

Compulsory national health insurance, crop subsidies for farmers, -- defeated by his political enemies

But some things pass – Minimum wage from 40 to 70 cents, Social Security extended to 10m more people, flood control and irrigation projects. Urban renewal projects tear down substandard housing and build 810k new units for low-income families.