Chapter 20 sec 3 The Great Society

LBJ Bio – 4th generation Texan, grew up in the hill country, not poor but not rich either. Graduated from Southwest Texas Teachers College in 1930

Went to the House in 1937 – felt himself to be a “New Dealer”, FDR mentored him and he served on key House committees, was able to get electricity for his district , and needed water projects, -- learned his leadership style.

Elected to the Senate in 1948, by 87 events.

Senate majority leader in 1955. Mastered the “LBJ treatment” – shepherded the 1957 Civil Rights Act through Congress.

Ran for VP with Kennedy in 1960. Was sworn in as president on Air Force One in Dallas after Kennedy’s assassination in November 1963.

Johnson urged Congress to pass the tax cut, and the civil rights legislation that Kennedy had been working on before his death. The tax cut was passed in Feb 1964 for a 10 billion $ reduction in taxes, it spurred economic growth as hoped and reduced the deficit from 6 bil to 4 bil in 2 years. In July LBJ pushed through the Civil Rights Act of 1964 over the resistance of most southern senators and representatives. The Civil Rights Act prohibited discrimination based on race, religion, national origin, or sex. It granted the federal government new powers to enforce these provisions for Americans at the state level as well as the federal level.

Once the remaining Kennedy legislation was resolved Johnson began his own agenda – the fight against poverty in America.

“unconditional war on poverty in American” for those “on the outskirts of hope”

August 1964 – Economic Opportunity Act

1 billion for youth programs – Job Corps Youth Training Program, VISTA, Project Head Start

Small business loans, and the Community Action Program that encouraged poor people to participate in public works programs.

1964 Election – Johnson v. Barry Goldwater

Goldwater wanted to walk back this social legislation, believed the federal government had no business in these programs, he wanted to end Social Security and sell the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Most Americans at the time believed that the government had a role in helping people and should be active in solving the nation’s problems. Goldwater claimed he would use nuclear weapons on Cuba and North Vietnam. Johnson’s “daisy-girl” ad ran on television only once, but was repeated on news channels because of its chilling intensity – branding Goldwater as a warmonger without ever mentioning his name. Johnson claimed that like Kennedy he did not believe American troops would help the situation in Vietnam.

LBJ wins with 61% of the popular vote and 486 electoral votes (270 was all he needed to win) Goldwater got 52. The Congress also held a Democratic majority. Not since the days of the New Deal had this situation existed. LBJ rolled up his sleeves and got to work on the real business of solving discrimination and poverty in America.

THE GREAT SOCIETY – Johnson’s program is announced in May 1965.

206 bills were passed in all.

Education – Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 – textbooks and library materials for public and parochial schools – 1 billion dollars. One of the first federal education aid bills.

Healthcare – Medicare (65 and over) and Medicaid (welfare recipients) 1965

Housing – creates the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to subsidize low and middle income housing, building 240,000 units of low-rent public housing

Immigration – the National Origins Act of 1924 set quotas for immigrants of about 150,000 annually. The Immigration Act of 1965 open the door to include non-Europeans and ended quotas based on nationality

Environment – Water Quality Act of 1965

Consumer Protection – truth in packaging laws and labeling requirements for consumer products, safety standards for automobiles and food.

Legal Reforms and the Warren Court –

Congressional reapportionment – made the congressional districts be redrawn so that voters have more equal representation – rural areas had the power but once reapportionment occurred things became more equal. 600 – 900k

Rights of the accused – Mapp v. Ohio illegally seized evidence can’t be used

Gideon v. Wainwright free legal counsel to those who can’t afford it, Escobedo v. Illinois lawyer present during questioning, Miranda v. Arizona must be read your rights before questioning – all to protect the right of a fair trial.

Warren expands rights of accused persons. Some of this has been walked back now, but the basic ideas are still in place.

Impact of the Great Society –

Poor in America falls from 21% in 1962 to 11% in 1973

Minorities vote in large numbers, run for political office. Voting Rights Act of 1965 – no more literacy tests or poll taxes. Feds can enforce voter rights in the state and local elections.

Civil rights Act of 1968 – end to housing discrimination

Affirmative Action programs to help overcome the effects of long term discrimination….opportunities from special efforts to hire, enroll and promote minorities and women in colleges, the work place

In the 1970s and 1980’s a conservative backlash develops against many Great Society programs but the thing that really ends them is the growing conflict and then full scale war in Vietnam.