

Chapter 7 Lesson 2

The Home Front

Congress created many new government agencies as part of the war effort. These agencies were staffed by government officials but also by business executives and managers and their functions were to better organize the United States' war efforts.

- 1) War Industries Board (WIB): coordinated the production of war materials. This organization was given significant powers by President Wilson. The WIB was able to tell manufacturers what they could produce, allocate resources, set prices and order new factory construction. The WIB was led by Bernard Baruch and it also settled labor disputes. The Production levels of the US rose by 20% during this time. The WIB was decommissioned January 1, 1919.
- 2) The Food Administration: was led by Herbert Hoover. The role of the Food Admin was to increase food production while limiting civilian consumption. Civilians were encouraged to conserve food by going meatless, wheatless, etc and to plant victory gardens (to grow their own vegetables).



- 3) The Fuel Administration: was created to manage the use of coal and oil. It was led by Harry Garfield and used several methods to encourage Americans to conserve. The Fuel Admin began the use of Daylight Savings Time in early 1918 with the first day of summer DST set on March 31, 1918. The Fuel Admin also encouraged heatless Mondays and shortened the workweeks at civilian factories.

To fund the war effort (32 billion) the government raised income taxes, added corporate taxes and borrowed money through the sale of bonds. (Liberty bonds and Victory bonds)



- 4) National War Labor Board (NWLB): was created in April 1918 to prevent strikes from disrupting the war production effort. The NWLB helped workers receive higher wages, shorter workweeks and the right to have a union. In return the labor union leaders promised to prevent strikes.

Other labor situations: Many companies began to hire women because so many men were involved in the war effort. Although most women returned to their previous positions after the war, women had proved that they were capable of doing jobs that many had perceived to be male only occupations. Many companies began to recruit African American workers from the South. This led to what is known as the Great Migration. Between 300,000 and 500,000 African Americans moved to northern cities, this migration changed the demographic and political make-up of many large northern cities. Large numbers of Mexicans migrated to America to help in the farm and ranching industries. And many Mexican-Americans migrated to major cities, where they often lived in segregated neighborhoods called barrios.

- 5) Committee on Public Information (CPI): the purpose of the CPI, or Creel Committee, was to shape public opinion concerning the war. The CPI used a variety of people to help sway public opinion. They used actors, advertising execs, artists, musicians, etc to get the point across. The CPI also used short speeches (4 minutes) in public places to sway public opinion. These were given by the Four-Minute Men. In the beginning, the Creel Committee avoided any untruths and disliked the use of the word propaganda, believing that the word itself sent negative messages.
- 6) Espionage Act of 1917: made it illegal to aid the enemy, give false reports, or interfere with the war effort. This law was designed to limit opposition to the war.

- 7) Sedition Act of 1918: made it illegal to speak out against the war effort. *Schenck v. United States* upheld the constitutionality of the two laws. In this case Schenck was convicted of violating the two acts by passing out pamphlets urging men to resist being drafted into the military. The Supreme Court unanimously upheld the law, disregarding the concept of free speech.

As American entered the war the numbers of men in the military were very limited. While many men volunteered, many more were needed. The Selective Service Act of 1917 required that all men between the ages of 21 and 30 register for the draft. A lottery would then determine who would go before the draft board and be selected. By the end of the war about 2.8 million men were drafted and about 2 million volunteered. Of the men who served, about 50,000 died in combat, 60,000 from disease and about 200,000 were wounded. Many soldiers and civilians all over the world died in the influenza epidemic of 1918-19. The epidemic killed between millions of people (40-50 million old estimate; 50-100 million newer estimate). The influenza killed over 500,000 Americans.

Many minorities served in the United States Army. About 400,000 African American troops fought in the war. They faced great discrimination but were commended for their valiant efforts in battle. They were even praised by the French commander, Marshal Philippe Petain. About 12,000 Native Americans, 20,000 Puerto Ricans, thousands of Mexican Americans and Asians (who fought while not citizens) fought in WWI. All of the minority groups faced great persecution, but most fought with great valor.

WWI was the war in which women were allowed to serve in an official capacity. They often worked in clerical positions and some were radio operators, photographers, chemists and pharmacists. In the Navy, women were enlisted and wore a standard uniform and were assigned a rank. The army refused to enlist women but hired women to fill these roles. The Army Nurse Corps was made up of women who did serve in the army not work for the army.