

Supporting the War Effort

Objectives

1. Find out how the United States quickly prepared for entry into World War I.
2. Learn what measures the government took to control the wartime economy.
3. Discover how the need to build support for the war sometimes clashed with civil liberties.

Main Idea

After entering World War I, the United States quickly had to increase its military force.



Women of the U.S. Navy drilling

Prepare to Read

Reading Skill

Connect Main Ideas All the ideas in a section relate to one another. Look for several types of connections. For example, these connections may be cause and effect, parts of a category, or comparison-contrast. In addition, some ideas simply provide more information about a larger idea.

Vocabulary Builder

High-Use Words

accelerate, p. 713

collide, p. 715

Key Terms and People

mobilize, p. 712

Jeannette Rankin, p. 713

illiterate, p. 713

Herbert Hoover, p. 714

Eugene V. Debs, p. 715

★ **Background Knowledge** As you have learned, President Wilson had been unable to maintain American neutrality. Now that the nation had declared war on Germany, it faced enormous challenges.

Building the Military

The United States entered the war with a large navy. However, it had only the world's sixteenth largest army, numbering just 125,000 men. In order to contribute to an Allied victory, the nation would have to mobilize quickly. To **mobilize** is to prepare for war.

Selective Service Immediately after the United States declared war, eager young men began volunteering for military service. Still, volunteers alone would not be enough to expand the army quickly. Wilson called upon Congress to establish a draft.

After a month of debate, Congress passed the Selective Service Act. The law required all young men between the ages of 21 and 30 to register for the military draft. By war's end, almost four million Americans had served in uniform.

Women in the Military Women were not subject to the draft. Still, American women had a long history of volunteerism, especially during the Progressive Era. More than 30,000 women volunteered for service. Two thirds of these women served in the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy Nurse Corps. The rest performed clerical work, such as filing papers or sending and receiving telegraph messages, as members of the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps. They became the first women in American history to hold official military rank.

Still, leading American women were divided over the war. Some opposed war under all circumstances. Jane Addams cofounded the Women's Peace Party in 1915 and continued to speak out for peace even after the United States entered the war. Representative Jeannette Rankin, of Montana, the first woman elected to Congress, voted against Wilson's war resolution. "As a woman I can't go to war," Rankin said, "and I refuse to send anyone else."

Others, such as suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt, urged women to support the war effort. Catt hoped that women's wartime service would accelerate their drive to win the vote. In fact, this proved to be the case. As you have read, Congress passed the Nineteenth Amendment in 1919, shortly after the end of World War I.

A Diverse Force The military reflected the increasingly diverse makeup of the nation. About one in every five recruits had been born in foreign lands such as the Philippines, Mexico, or Italy. Many others were children of immigrants.

Native Americans were not American citizens at the time. Therefore, they were not subject to the draft. Still, a large number of Native Americans volunteered for service.

African Americans Serve Some 380,000 African Americans also served during the war. Their opportunities were restricted by official segregation and widespread racism. Still, civil rights leader W.E.B. Du Bois encouraged African Americans to support the war effort. "Let us, while the war lasts, forget our special grievances and close ranks . . . with our fellow citizens," Du Bois urged.

Still, African Americans faced discrimination in the military. They were placed in all-black units, of which only 10 percent were sent to combat. Most African American troops were confined to such noncombat duties as unloading ships, working in kitchens, or constructing barracks.

Some African American units fought under French command. Several members of a unit known as the Harlem Hell Fighters received France's highest medal for bravery, the *Croix de Guerre*, or cross of war.

The Military as Educator One in four draftees and recruits were illiterate, or unable to read and write. They could not read newspapers or even write letters home to their families. In addition, some young men from poor rural areas were not used to eating daily meals, taking regular baths, or using indoor plumbing.

For these young men, the military served as a great educator. The army taught millions not only how to fight, but how to read. Recruits learned about nutrition, personal hygiene, and patriotism.

Checkpoint How did the United States build its military force?

Vocabulary Builder

accelerate (ak SEL er ayt) v. to increase in speed; to move faster

An African American Soldier

As in earlier wars, African American soldiers served in separate units. This bugler served in France with the 15th New York Infantry. **Critical Thinking: Evaluate Information** What image of this soldier does this painting create?



Main Idea

In order to produce needed materials, the government took greater control over the economy.



Propaganda posters such as this one encouraged industrial workers to increase production for the war effort.

Main Idea

The government took strong action to win support for the war and to suppress dissent.

Managing the War Effort

Entry into the war forced a reshaping of the nation's economy. Both agriculture and industry mobilized for war.

Managing Food Supplies President Wilson chose Herbert Hoover to head a new Food Administration. Early in the war, Hoover had directed relief efforts in Belgium. His new job was to assure adequate food supplies for both civilians and troops.

Hoover urged Americans to conserve valuable food resources. To save on food, Americans observed "wheatless Mondays" and "meatless Tuesdays." Many grew their own vegetables in "victory gardens." The President's wife had one on the White House lawn.

Producing for War The war greatly increased demands on American industries. For example, the government placed orders for two million rifles and 130 million pairs of socks. To oversee the shift to war production, Wilson set up a new agency, the War Industries Board (WIB).

At first, the WIB had limited power. During an unusually cold winter in 1917 to 1918, there were shortages of fuel and crippling congestion at ports and on railroads. Wilson strengthened the war board and gave it a new head, Bernard Baruch. The board told industries what to produce, how much to charge, and how to use scarce resources. For example, to make sure there was enough tin for military use, the WIB forbade toy makers to use tin for toys.

Finding Workers War brought a labor shortage, as millions of men joined the military. Also, there was a steep drop in immigration, to a tenth of its prewar rate. To meet war demands, American industry needed workers.

To fill the jobs, business owners turned to two main sources. Women took on roles previously denied them, for example, as factory workers or elevator operators. And more than half a million African Americans left the rural South to work in factories of the Midwest and Northeast. They were drawn by the opportunity to earn money and to escape segregation.

Checkpoint What was the role of the War Industries Board?

Shaping Public Opinion

The government worked to whip up support for the war. At the same time, it took measures to stifle antiwar sentiments.

Calling on Patriotism An effective propaganda tool was the Committee on Public Information, appointed by the President. The committee recruited 75,000 "Four-Minute Men" to deliver brief patriotic speeches at places like movie theaters and ball parks. It also enlisted artists to produce pro-war cartoons and posters. One famous poster had Uncle Sam pointing a finger and sternly saying, "Uncle Sam wants YOU!"

The government issued Liberty Bonds to help finance the war. Movie stars toured the nation, urging Americans to buy bonds.

Suppressing Dissent The government took stern measures to suppress criticism of the war. Under the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918, authorities closed newspapers and jailed individuals for expressing antiwar views.

Among those jailed was labor leader Eugene V. Debs, a five-time presidential candidate of the Socialist Party. Debs was jailed in 1918 for giving a speech in which he urged workers not to support the war effort. "It is extremely dangerous to exercise the constitutional right of free speech in a country fighting to make democracy safe in the world," Debs commented.

At times, war fever collided with personal freedoms. Private organizations sprang up that encouraged people to spy on their neighbors. The largest of these, the 200,000-strong American Protective League, opened people's mail, tapped phones, and pried into medical records.

Anti-German Hysteria German Americans suffered, too. In towns across the country, citizens shunned, harassed, and even assaulted German Americans who might once have been their friends. Some German Americans were tarred and feathered. Many schools stopped teaching the German language.

Anti-German feeling even affected the language. People referred to sauerkraut as "liberty cabbage." German measles became "liberty measles."

Checkpoint How did the government build public support for the war effort?

★ Looking Back and Ahead The war effort deeply affected life at home. In the next section, you will see how America's entry into the war helped to turn the tide in favor of the Allies.

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Comprehension and Critical Thinking

1. **(a) Recall** What steps did the United States take to mobilize for the war?

(b) Identify Alternatives

Some Americans opposed the Selective Service Act. Do you think the government had other alternatives? Explain.

2. **(a) Recall** How did the government suppress dissent during World War I?

(b) Support a Point of View

Do you think the government is justified in suppressing civil liberties during wartime? Give reasons for your opinion.

Reading Skill

3. **Connect Main Ideas** How are the main ideas of the text under the heading "Managing the War Effort" connected to the main ideas of the text under the heading "Shaping Public Opinion"?

Vocabulary Builder

4. Write two definitions of the key term **mobilize**—one a formal definition for a teacher, the other an informal definition for a younger child.

Writing

5. List supporting information to include in a short essay discussing how the war effort at times conflicted with personal freedom.

Vocabulary Builder

collide (koh LĪD) v. to clash; to come together with great force



Connect Main Ideas

Connect the main ideas following the subheading "Calling on Patriotism" to those following the subheading "Suppressing Dissent."