The Roaring Twenties: A Time Of Injustice Essay, Research Paper

The Roaring Twenties: a Time of Injustice

The “Roaring Twenties” was the age that was supposed to have been a blast when people were becoming free-willed. The real scoop is the 1920’s were a time of injustice and murder. It was a time that sent our great country into debt.

There were many unjust killings in the 1920’s. At the Cook County Jail in Chicago, a criminal was hanged in front of 200 prisoners.1 This trial of injustice was to warn the prisoners to behave themselves. One college student from Dartmouth College killed another over an argument. The argument was over whiskey.

During the 1920’s the KKK (Ku Klux Klan) came back, slowly gaining more power. The KKK disliked Negroes, Catholics, Jews, and foreigners. The KKK murdered many people. At this time in 1920, there were about 2,000 national members in the KKK. By 1924, there were several million KKK members in their national membership.2 These KKK members terrorized those who were different from them.

Wages were cut dramatically while the prices of items only grew. U.S. Steel cut wages back to the prewar rate of 30 cents an hour. This wage provided barely enough to survive. A movement to wear overalls spread over the South in hope of cutting clothing prices. By 1929, 60% of the people had incomes at or below the level necessary to survive. Forty-nine percent of the people who were hit by the agricultural depression lived in rural areas.3

However, America was not the only country headed towards a great depression. In England, there was a severe depression that left 18% of the people to go unemployed.4 The Weimer Republic of Germany was also having an economic crisis. They said burning money was cheaper then buying firewood. In Italy, political strife led to the ascendancy of the brutal fascist Benito Mussolini. In France, the value of the franc plummeted. These are only a few of the countries that were headed to or in a great depression.

Many people were fleeing from their countries because of how deeply they were going in debt. However, they did not find America very welcoming. Not only was America greatly in debt, America was trying to pass anti-immigration laws. These laws would keep out nonwhites and the people who had ideas that clashed with America’s conservative views.

The government in the 1920’s became very relaxed in their punishment towards people. Babe Ruth received a $100 fine and a day in jail for a speeding ticket.5 Because he was an athlete, he was released at 4:00 p.m. that night so he could make the sixth inning of a baseball game. Selling of cigarettes to adults was made legal. There were scandals in Washington that went all the way to the Oval Office. Why was the government so relaxed? Could it have been they knew we were headed to a great war and a great depression? Were they trying to give people some peace and hope before their lives were ruined? The answer to that question may never be known.

One great man in the 1920’s was Eugene Debbs. He was born as a grocer’s son. In his teens, he worked on the railroad. He grew up to be the secretary-treasure of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen.6 He quit his job so he would be able to set up the Railway Union. He believed in industrial organization.

Debbs set up many strikes for the workers. At one of the strikes, men from the Pullman Company were fighting a 25% pay cut. Federal troops collided with the strikers, and 30 men were killed.7 Debbs was sent to do jail time. The strike was smashed and the Union folded.

Debbs became the Socialists party’s Presidential candidate in 1912. He greatly opposed World War I. When the Espionage Act came around, it made him angry.

He then defied arrest stating, “I would rather be a free soul in jail then a sycophant and a coward in the streets.”8 He was sent to prison in1920 but was pardoned by President Harding in 1921. Debbs also said, “?they cannot put the socialist movement in jail.”9 What he said is true to this day. Congress never has and never will put an idea behind bars.

In the 1920’s, there were many events that were similar to the events of today. There was a murder trial similar to the O.J. Simpson trial. A brokerage house on Wall Street was bombed in the 1920’s, similar to the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City in 1990. The stock market had some all time highs, and some all time lows, just like today’s stock market. Also, many people went into debt because of easy credit.

The “Roaring Twenties” may have been a great time for many people. It is true that many new things were coming along in the 1920’s. In 1929, scientists started experimenting with color television.10 However, nearly no one thought of what the consequences would be. It put our country into an economical crisis. It hurt our country in a way that will never be forgotten.