

The War at Home

MAIN IDEA

World War I spurred social, political, and economic change in the United States.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Such changes increased government powers and expanded economic opportunities.

Terms & Names

- War Industries Board
- Bernard M. Baruch
- propaganda
- George Creel
- Espionage and Sedition Acts
- Great Migration

One American's Story

The suffragist Harriot Stanton Blatch visited a munitions plant in New Jersey during World War I and proudly described women at work.

A PERSONAL VOICE HARRIOT STANTON BLATCH

“The day I visited the place, in one of the largest shops women had only just been put on the work, but it was expected that in less than a month they would be found handling all of the twelve hundred machines under that one roof alone. The skill of the women staggers one. After a week or two they master the operations on the ‘turret,’ gauging and routing machines. The best worker on the ‘facing’ machine is a woman. She is a piece worker, as many of the women are. . . . This woman earned, the day I saw her, five dollars and forty cents. She tossed about the fuse parts, and played with that machine, as I would with a baby.”

—quoted in *We, the American Women*

Before World War I, women had been excluded from many jobs. However, the wartime need for labor brought over a million more women into the work force. For women, as for the rest of society, World War I brought about far-reaching changes.



▲ Harriot Stanton Blatch followed in the footsteps of her famous mother, Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

Congress Gives Power to Wilson

Winning the war was not a job for American soldiers alone. As Secretary of War Newton Baker said, “War is no longer Samson with his shield and spear and sword, and David with his sling. It is the conflict of smokestacks now, the combat of the driving wheel and the engine.” Because World War I was such an immense conflict, the entire economy had to be refocused on the war effort. The shift from producing consumer goods to producing war supplies was too complicated and important a job for private industry to handle on its own, so business and government collaborated in the effort. In the process, the power of government was greatly expanded. Congress gave President Wilson direct control over much of the economy, including the power to fix prices and to regulate—even to nationalize—certain war-related industries.

Background

In 1913 Henry Ford speeded up factory production with a constantly moving assembly line. Wartime production spread this technique throughout the country.

WAR INDUSTRIES BOARD The main regulatory body was the **War Industries Board** (WIB). It was established in 1917 and reorganized in 1918 under the leadership of **Bernard M. Baruch** (bə-rōōk'), a prosperous businessman. The board encouraged companies to use mass-production techniques to increase efficiency. It also urged them to eliminate waste by standardizing products—for instance, by making only 5 colors of typewriter ribbons instead of 150. The WIB set production quotas and allocated raw materials.

Under the WIB, industrial production in the United States increased by about 20 percent. However, the WIB applied price controls only at the wholesale level. As a result, retail prices soared, and in 1918 they were almost double what they had been before the war. Corporate profits soared as well, especially in such industries as chemicals, meatpacking, oil, and steel.

The WIB was not the only federal agency to regulate the economy during the war. The Railroad Administration controlled the railroads, and the Fuel Administration monitored coal supplies and rationed gasoline and heating oil. In addition, many people adopted “gasless Sundays” and “lightless nights” to conserve fuel. In March 1918, the Fuel Administration introduced another conservation measure: daylight-saving time, which had first been proposed by Benjamin Franklin in the 1770s as a way to take advantage of the longer days of summer.

WAR ECONOMY Wages in most industries rose during the war years. Hourly wages for blue-collar workers—those in the metal trades, shipbuilding, and meatpacking, for example—rose by about 20 percent. A household’s income, however, was largely undercut by rising food prices and housing costs.

By contrast, stockholders in large corporations saw enormous profits. One industrial manufacturer, the DuPont Company, saw its stock multiply in value 1,600 percent between 1914 and 1918. By that time the company was earning a \$68-million yearly profit. As a result of the uneven pay between labor and management, increasing work hours, child labor, and dangerously “sped-up” conditions, unions boomed. Union membership climbed from about 2.5 million in 1916 to more than 4 million in 1919. More than 6,000 strikes broke out during the war months.

To deal with disputes between management and labor, President Wilson established the National War Labor Board in 1918. Workers who refused to obey board

MAIN IDEA

Making Inferences

A Why would labor disputes affect the war effort?

decisions could lose their draft exemptions. “Work or fight,” the board told them. However, the board also worked to improve factory conditions. It pushed for an eight-hour workday, promoted safety inspections, and enforced the child labor ban. **A**

FOOD ADMINISTRATION To help produce and conserve food, Wilson set up the Food Administration under Herbert Hoover. Instead of rationing food, he called on people to follow the “gospel of the clean plate.” He declared one day a week “meatless,” another “sweetless,” two days “wheatless,” and two other days “porkless.” Restaurants removed sugar bowls from the table and served bread only after the first course.

The War Economy, 1914–1920

Average Annual Income

1914	\$627
1915	\$633
1916	\$708
1917	\$830
1918	\$1,047
1919	\$1,201
1920	\$1,407

Source: *Historical Statistics of the United States*

Consumer Price Index*

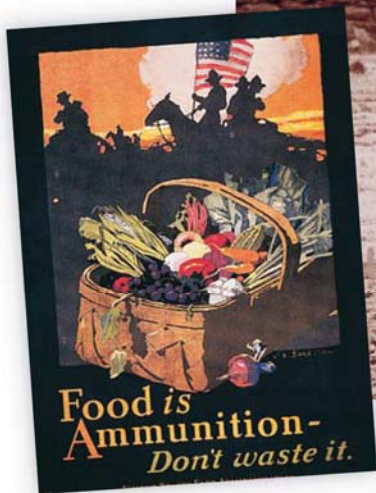


*A measure of changes in the prices of goods and services commonly bought by consumers; see *Economics Handbook*, page R39.

SKILLBUILDER Interpreting Graphs

1. How did the rise in average annual income compare with the rise in prices from 1914 to 1920?
2. How might the combined change in wages and prices affect a working family?

A Japanese-American family tends a victory garden in New York City in 1917.



A wartime poster encourages Americans to conserve resources.



Homeowners planted “victory gardens” in their yards. Schoolchildren spent their after-school hours growing tomatoes and cucumbers in public parks. As a result of these and similar efforts, American food shipments to the Allies tripled. Hoover also set a high government price on wheat and other staples. Farmers responded by putting an additional 40 million acres into production. In the process, they increased their income by almost 30 percent.

Selling the War

Once the government had extended its control over the economy, it was faced with two major tasks: raising money and convincing the public to support the war.

WAR FINANCING The United States spent about \$35.5 billion on the war effort. The government raised about one-third of this amount through taxes, including a progressive income tax (which taxed high incomes at a higher rate than low incomes), a war-profits tax, and higher excise taxes on tobacco, liquor, and luxury goods. It raised the rest through public borrowing by selling “Liberty Loan” and “Victory Loan” bonds.

The government sold bonds through tens of thousands of volunteers. Movie stars spoke at rallies in factories, in schools, and on street corners. As Treasury Secretary William G. McAdoo put it, only “a friend of Germany” would refuse to buy war bonds. **B**

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC INFORMATION To popularize the war, the government set up the nation’s first **propaganda** agency, the Committee on Public Information (CPI). Propaganda is a kind of biased communication designed to influence people’s thoughts and actions. The head of the CPI was a former muck-raking journalist named **George Creel**.

Creel persuaded the nation’s artists and advertising agencies to create thousands of paintings, posters, cartoons, and sculptures promoting the war. He recruited some 75,000 men to serve as “Four-Minute Men,” who spoke about everything relating to the war: the draft, rationing, bond drives, victory gardens, and topics such as “Why We Are Fighting” and “The Meaning of America.”

Nor did Creel neglect the written word. He ordered a printing of almost 25 million copies of “How the War Came to America”—which included Wilson’s war message—in English and other languages. He distributed some 75 million pamphlets, booklets, and leaflets, many with the enthusiastic help of the Boy

MAIN IDEA

Summarizing

B How did the government raise money for the war effort?

Scouts. Creel's propaganda campaign was highly effective. However, while the campaign promoted patriotism, it also inflamed hatred and violations of the civil liberties of certain ethnic groups and opponents of the war.

Attacks on Civil Liberties Increase

Early in 1917, President Wilson expressed his fears about the consequences of war hysteria.

A PERSONAL VOICE WOODROW WILSON

“Once lead this people into war and they’ll forget there ever was such a thing as tolerance. To fight you must be brutal and ruthless, and the spirit of ruthless brutality will enter into the very fiber of our national life, infecting Congress, the courts, the policeman on the beat, the man in the street. Conformity would be the only virtue, and every man who refused to conform would have to pay the penalty.”

—quoted in *Cobb* of “The World”

The president's prediction came true. As soon as war was declared, conformity indeed became the order of the day. Attacks on civil liberties, both unofficial and official, erupted.

MAIN IDEA

Developing Historical Perspective

C What effect did the war have on the lives of recent immigrants?

ANTI-IMMIGRANT HYSTERIA The main targets of these attacks were Americans who had emigrated from other nations, especially those from Germany and Austria-Hungary. The most bitter attacks were directed against the nearly 2 million Americans who had been born in Germany, but other foreign-born persons and Americans of German descent suffered as well. **C**

Many Americans with German names lost their jobs. Orchestras refused to play the music of Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. Some towns with German names changed them. Schools stopped teaching the German language, and librarians removed books by German authors from the shelves. People even resorted to violence against German Americans, flogging them or smearing them

Analyzing Political Cartoons

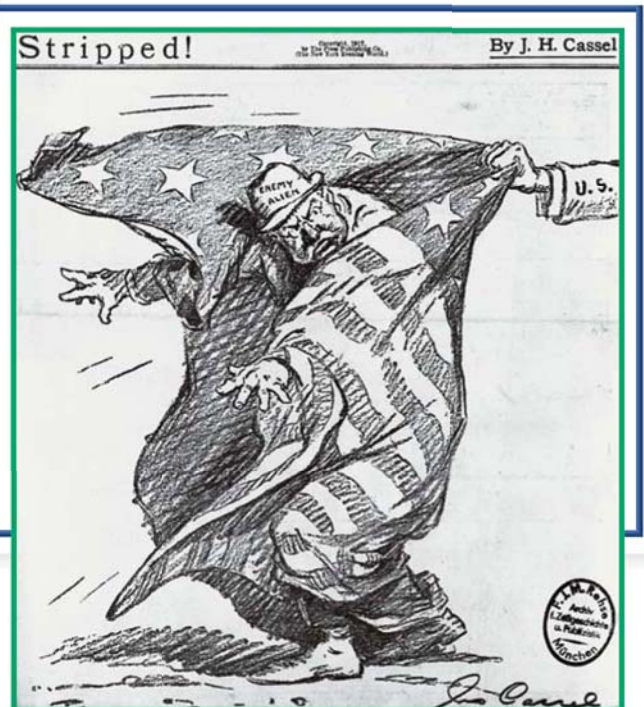
THE ENEMY WITHIN

After the United States entered the war, government propaganda helped inflame prejudice against recent immigrants. In the suspicious atmosphere of the time, conspiracy theories flourished, and foreign spies were believed to be everywhere. This cartoon reveals the hysteria that gripped the country in 1917.

SKILLBUILDER Analyzing Political Cartoons

1. What is happening in this cartoon?
2. What does the cartoonist suggest will happen to “enemy aliens”?

 SEE SKILLBUILDER HANDBOOK, PAGE R24.



with tar and feathers. A mob in Collinsville, Illinois, wrapped a German flag around a German-born miner named Robert Prager and lynched him. A jury cleared the mob's leader.

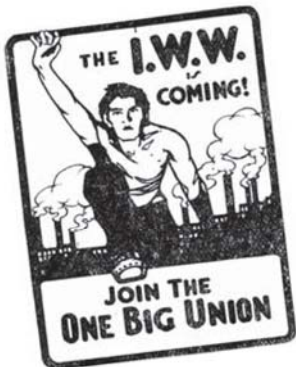
Finally, in a burst of anti-German fervor, Americans changed the name of German measles to "liberty measles." Hamburger—named after the German city of Hamburg—became "Salisbury steak" or "liberty sandwich," depending on whether you were buying it in a store or eating it in a restaurant. Sauerkraut was renamed "liberty cabbage," and dachshunds turned into "liberty pups."

ESPIONAGE AND SEDITION ACTS In June 1917 Congress passed the Espionage Act, and in May 1918 it passed the Sedition Act. Under the **Espionage and Sedition Acts** a person could be fined up to \$10,000 and sentenced to 20 years in jail for interfering with the war effort or for saying anything disloyal, profane, or abusive about the government or the war effort.

Like the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, these laws clearly violated the spirit of the First Amendment. Their passage led to over 2,000 prosecutions for loosely defined antiwar activities; of these, over half resulted in convictions. Newspapers and magazines that opposed the war or criticized any of the Allies lost their mailing privileges. The House of Representatives refused to seat Victor Berger, a socialist congressman from Wisconsin, because of his antiwar views. Columbia University fired a distinguished psychologist because he opposed the war. A colleague who supported the war thereupon resigned in protest, saying, "If we have to suppress everything we don't like to hear, this country is resting on a pretty wobbly basis."

The Espionage and Sedition Acts targeted socialists and labor leaders. Eugene V. Debs was handed a ten-year prison sentence for speaking out against the war and the draft. The anarchist Emma Goldman received a two-year prison sentence and a \$10,000 fine for organizing the No Conscription League. When she left jail, the authorities deported her to Russia. "Big Bill" Haywood and other leaders of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) were accused of sabotaging the war effort because they urged workers to strike for better conditions and higher pay. Haywood was sentenced to a long prison term. (He later skipped bail and fled to Russia.) Under such federal pressure, the IWW faded away. **D**

Vocabulary
sedition: rebellion against one's government; treason



▲ This Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) sticker encourages workers to join the union.

The War Encourages Social Change

Wars often unleash powerful social forces. The period of World War I was no exception; important changes transformed the lives of African Americans and women.

AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE WAR Black public opinion about the war was divided. On one side were people like W. E. B. Du Bois, who believed that blacks should support the war effort.

A PERSONAL VOICE W. E. B. DU BOIS

"That which the German power represents today spells death to the aspirations of Negroes and all darker races for equality, freedom and democracy. . . . Let us, while this war lasts, forget our special grievances and close our ranks shoulder to shoulder with our own white fellow citizens and the allied nations that are fighting for democracy."

—"Close Ranks"

W. E. B. Du Bois ►



MAIN IDEA Analyzing Effects

D What impact did the Espionage and Sedition Acts have on free speech?

Du Bois believed that African-American support for the war would strengthen calls for racial justice. In contrast, William Monroe Trotter, founder of the *Boston Guardian*, believed that victims of racism should not support a racist government. Trotter condemned Du Bois's accommodationist approach and favored protest instead. Nevertheless, despite grievances over continued racial inequality in the United States, most African Americans backed the war.

THE GREAT MIGRATION In concrete terms, the greatest effect of the First World War on African Americans' lives was that it accelerated the **Great Migration**, the large-scale movement of hundreds of thousands of Southern blacks to cities in the North. This great population shift had already begun before the war in the late 19th century, when African Americans trickled northward to escape the Jim Crow South—but after the turn of the century, the trickle became a tidal wave.

Several factors contributed to the tremendous increase in black migration. First, many African Americans sought to escape racial discrimination in the South, which made it hard to make a living and often threatened their lives. Also, a boll weevil infestation, aided by floods and droughts, had ruined much of the South's cotton fields. In the North, there were more job opportunities. For example, Henry Ford opened his automobile assembly line to black workers in 1914. The outbreak of World War I and the drop in European immigration increased job opportunities for African Americans in steel mills, munitions plants, and stockyards. Northern manufacturers sent recruiting agents to distribute free railroad passes through the South. In addition, the publisher of the black-owned newspaper *Chicago Defender* bombarded Southern blacks with articles contrasting Dixieland lynchings with the prosperity of African Americans in the North. **E**

MAIN IDEA

Making Inferences

E How did the war open opportunities for African Americans?

History Through

Art

THE MIGRATION OF THE NEGRO, PANEL NO. 1 (1940–41)

This painting by Jacob Lawrence shows three of the most common destinations for African Americans leaving the South. **Why do you think the artist has not shown any individual facial features?**



HISTORICAL SPOTLIGHT

RACE RIOTS

Racial prejudice against African Americans in the North sometimes took violent forms. In July 1917, a race riot exploded in East St. Louis, Illinois. White workers, furious over the hiring of African Americans as strikebreakers at a munitions plant, rampaged through the streets. Forty blacks and nine whites died.

Another riot erupted in July 1919 in Chicago when a 17-year-old African American swam from the water off a “black beach” to the water off a “white beach.” There, white bathers threw rocks at him until he drowned.

African Americans retaliated, and several riots broke out in the city. Order was restored after several days of violence that involved about 10,000 people.

However, racial prejudice against African Americans also existed in the North. The press of new migrants to Northern cities caused overcrowding and intensified racial tensions.

Nevertheless, between 1910 and 1930, hundreds of thousands of African Americans migrated to such cities as Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia. Author Richard Wright described the great exodus.

A PERSONAL VOICE RICHARD WRIGHT

“We are bitter no more; we are leaving! We are leaving our homes, pulling up stakes to move on. We look up at the high southern sky and remember all the sunshine and all the rain and we feel a sense of loss, but we are leaving. We look out at the wide green fields which our eyes saw when we first came into the world and we feel full of regret, but we are leaving. We scan the kind black faces we have looked upon since we first saw the light of day, and, though pain is in our hearts, we are leaving. We take one last furtive look over our shoulders to the Big House—high upon a hill beyond the railroad tracks—where the Lord of the Land lives, and we feel glad, for we are leaving.”

—quoted in *12 Million Black Voices*

WOMEN IN THE WAR While African Americans began new lives, women moved into jobs that had been held exclusively by men. They became railroad workers, cooks, dockworkers, and bricklayers. They mined coal and took part in shipbuilding. At the same time, women continued to fill more traditional jobs as nurses, clerks, and teachers. Many women worked as volunteers, serving at Red Cross facilities and encouraging the sale of bonds and the planting of victory gardens. Other women, such as Jane Addams, were active in the peace movement. Addams helped found the Women’s Peace Party in 1915 and remained a pacifist even after the United States entered the war. **F**

President Wilson acknowledged, “The services of women during the supreme crisis have been of the most signal usefulness and distinction; it is high time that part of our debt should be acknowledged.” While acknowledgment of that debt did not include equal pay for equal work, it did help bolster public support for woman suffrage. In 1919, Congress finally passed the Nineteenth Amendment, granting women the right to vote. In 1920 the amendment was ratified by the states.

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Effects

F What effect did the war have on women’s lives?

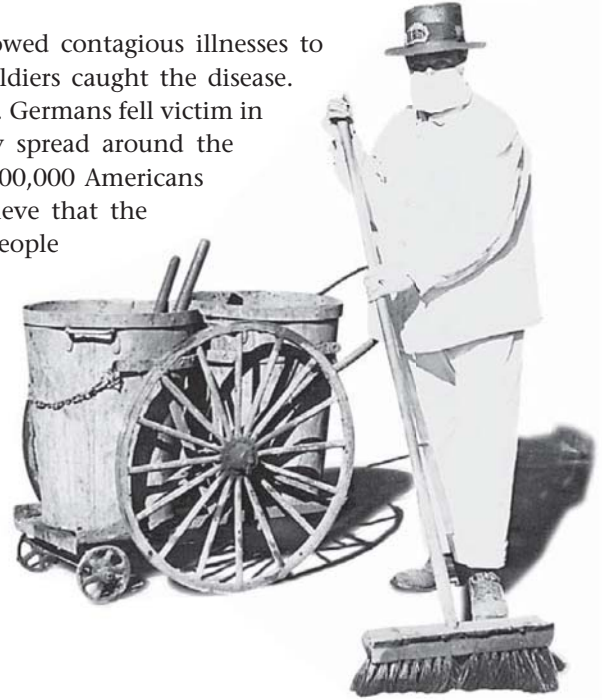
Women worked in a variety of jobs during the war. Here, women assemble an aircraft wing.



THE FLU EPIDEMIC In the fall of 1918, the United States suffered a home-front crisis when an international flu epidemic affected about one-quarter of the U.S. population. The effect of the epidemic on the economy was devastating. Mines shut down, telephone service was cut in half, and factories and offices staggered working hours to avoid contagion. Cities ran short of coffins, and the corpses of poor people lay unburied for as long as a week. The mysterious illness seemed to strike people who were otherwise in the best of health, and death could come in a matter of days. Doctors did not know what to do, other than to recommend cleanliness and quarantine. One epidemic survivor recalled that “so many people died from the flu they just rang the bells; they didn’t dare take [corpses] into the church.”

New York City street cleaners wore masks to avoid catching influenza.

In the army, where living conditions allowed contagious illnesses to spread rapidly, more than a quarter of the soldiers caught the disease. In some AEF units, one-third of the troops died. Germans fell victim in even larger numbers than the Allies. Possibly spread around the world by soldiers, the epidemic killed about 500,000 Americans before it disappeared in 1919. Historians believe that the influenza virus killed as many as 30 million people worldwide. **G**



MAIN IDEA

Making Inferences

G How did wartime conditions help spread the flu?

World War I brought death and disease to millions but, like the flu epidemic, the war also came to a sudden end. After four years of slaughter and destruction, the time had come to forge a peace settlement. Americans hoped that this “war to end all wars” would do just that. Leaders of the victorious nations gathered at Versailles outside Paris to work out the terms of peace, and President Wilson traveled to Europe to ensure it.

SECTION 3

ASSESSMENT

1. TERMS & NAMES For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- War Industries Board**
- propaganda**
- Espionage and Sedition Acts**
- Great Migration**
- Bernard M. Baruch**
- George Creel**

MAIN IDEA

2. TAKING NOTES

In a chart like the one shown, list some of the changes that the war brought about for each group.

Changes Brought About by the War	
African Americans	
Women	
Immigrants	

Explain how each group benefited from or was disadvantaged by these changes.

CRITICAL THINKING

3. DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

How did the war affect government power? **Think About:**

- how private business worked with government
- how much control the president gained over the economy
- the Espionage and Sedition Acts

4. MAKING INFERENCES

Why do you think the flu spread so quickly among the troops?

5. EVALUATING

Do you think that the war had a positive or a negative effect on American society? **Think About:**

- how the propaganda campaign influenced people’s behavior
- the new job opportunities for African Americans and women
- how the government controlled industry



SCHENCK v. UNITED STATES (1919)

ORIGINS OF THE CASE Charles Schenck, an official of the U.S. Socialist Party, distributed leaflets that called the draft a “deed against humanity” and compared conscription to slavery, urging conscripts to “assert your rights.” Schenck was convicted of sedition and sentenced to prison, but he argued that the conviction, punishment, and even the law itself violated his right to free speech. The Supreme Court agreed to hear his appeal.

THE RULING A unanimous court upheld Schenck’s conviction, stating that under wartime conditions, the words in the leaflets were not protected by the right to free speech.

LEGAL REASONING

The Supreme Court’s opinion in the *Schenck* case, written by Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., has become famous as a guide for how the First Amendment defines the right of free speech. Holmes wrote:

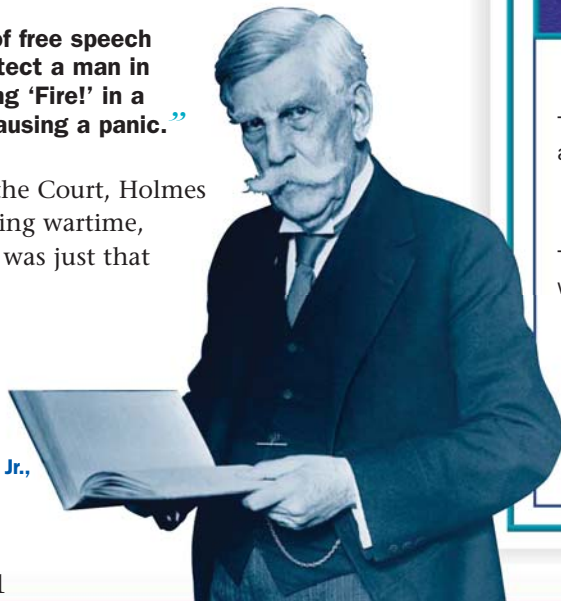
“The question in every case is whether the words used are used in such circumstances and are of such a nature as to create a clear and present danger that they will bring about the substantive evils that Congress has a right to prevent.”

Justice Holmes noted that “in ordinary times” the First Amendment might have protected Schenck, but “[w]hen a nation is at war many things that might be said in time of peace . . . will not be endured.”

The analogy that Holmes used to explain why Schenck could be punished for his words has become probably the best-known observation ever made about free speech:

“Protection of free speech would not protect a man in falsely shouting ‘Fire!’ in a theatre and causing a panic.”

Writing for the Court, Holmes implied that during wartime, Schenck’s leaflet was just that dangerous.



Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.,
Supreme Court Justice
1902–1932 ▶

LEGAL SOURCES

LEGISLATION

U.S. CONSTITUTION, FIRST AMENDMENT (1791)

“Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press.”

THE SEDITION ACT (1918)

“(W)hoever . . . shall willfully utter, print, write or publish any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the form of government, . . . Constitution, . . . military or naval forces, . . . flag, . . . or the uniform of the Army or Navy of the United States . . . shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment for not more than twenty years, or both.”

RELATED CASES

DEBS v. UNITED STATES (MARCH, 1919)

The conviction against Eugene Debs for speaking against the war and the draft is upheld.

FROHWERK v. UNITED STATES (MARCH, 1919)

The publisher of a newspaper that had criticized the war is sentenced with a fine and ten years in prison.

ABRAMS v. UNITED STATES (NOV., 1919)

Leaflets criticizing the U.S. expeditionary force in Russia are found to be unprotected by the First Amendment. Holmes writes a dissenting opinion calling for the “free trade of ideas.”

WHY IT MATTERED

During the course of World War I, the federal government brought approximately 2,000 prosecutions for violations of the Espionage Act of 1917 or the Sedition Act of 1918, the same laws under which it convicted Schenck, Debs, and Frohwerk.

By the fall of 1919, however, Holmes had changed his mind. The case of *Abrams v. United States* concerned leaflets that criticized President Wilson's "capitalistic" government for sending troops to put down the Russian Revolution. Justice Holmes, joined by Justice Louis Brandeis, dissented from the majority of the Court, which upheld the conviction. In his dissent, Holmes emphasized the importance of a free exchange of ideas so that truth will win out in the intellectual marketplace. His reasoning won him acclaim as a protector of free speech.

The belief that truth will eventually win out in the marketplace of ideas has become important legal justification for promoting freedom of speech.

HISTORICAL IMPACT

Disagreements about what kinds of speech are "free" under the First Amendment continue. During the 1950s, when people were jailed for supporting Communism, and during the Vietnam War, when war protestors supported draft resistance, these issues again reached the Supreme Court.

The Court has also been asked to decide if young people in schools have the same First Amendment rights as adults. In *Tinker v. Des Moines School District* (1969), the Court ordered a school to readmit students who had been suspended for wearing black arm bands in protest of the war in Vietnam.

This so-called symbolic speech, such as wearing an armband or burning a draft card or a flag to express an opinion, has sparked heated debate. In *Texas v. Johnson* (1989), the Court, by a narrow five to four vote, invalidated a law under which a man who burned an American flag to protest Reagan administration policies had been convicted. The decision so outraged

some people that members of Congress considered amending the Constitution to prohibit any "physical desecration" of the flag. The amendment did not pass. Our freedoms of expression continue to depend upon the words in the first article of the Bill of Rights, written more than 200 years ago.



▲ Eugene Debs was arrested for antiwar speeches like the one he gave at this 1916 presidential campaign stop.



◀ In 1965 Mary Beth Tinker and her brother, John, were suspended from school for wearing armbands that symbolically criticized the Vietnam War.

THINKING CRITICALLY

CONNECT TO HISTORY

1. **Analyzing Primary Sources** Read Justice Holmes's dissent in *Abrams v. United States*. Compare it with the opinion he wrote in *Schenck v. United States*. Explain the major difference or similarity in the two opinions.

 **SEE SKILLBUILDER HANDBOOK, PAGE R22.**

CONNECT TO TODAY

2.  **INTERNET ACTIVITY CLASSZONE.COM**

Visit the links for Historic Decisions of the Supreme Court to research articles about free speech issues. Select several of these issues—such as whether hate groups have a right to march—to discuss with other students in your class. Choose one issue and, as a group, write down as many arguments as you can on both sides of the issue. Then present a debate to the class.