

## Section 4

# The War's Impact

### Guide to Reading

#### Big Ideas

**Economics and Society** The change from wartime to peacetime caused many economic and social problems.

#### Content Vocabulary

- cost of living (p. 576)
- general strike (p. 577)
- deport (p. 580)

#### Academic Vocabulary

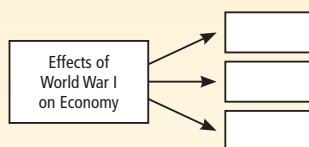
- widespread (p. 577)
- authorities (p. 580)

#### People and Events to Identify

- Calvin Coolidge (p. 577)
- Red Scare (p. 579)
- A. Mitchell Palmer (p. 579)
- J. Edgar Hoover (p. 580)

#### Reading Strategy

**Organizing** Complete a graphic organizer similar to the one below to list the effects of the end of World War I on the American economy.



America's victory overseas led to turmoil at home. The end of the wartime economy led to a depression and fears of communism, as strikes, riots, and bombings took place.

## An Economy in Turmoil

**MAIN Idea** The country suffered economic uncertainty, strikes, and riots in the year after the war.

**HISTORY AND YOU** Do you know anyone who has participated in a strike? Read why millions of workers went on strike in 1919.

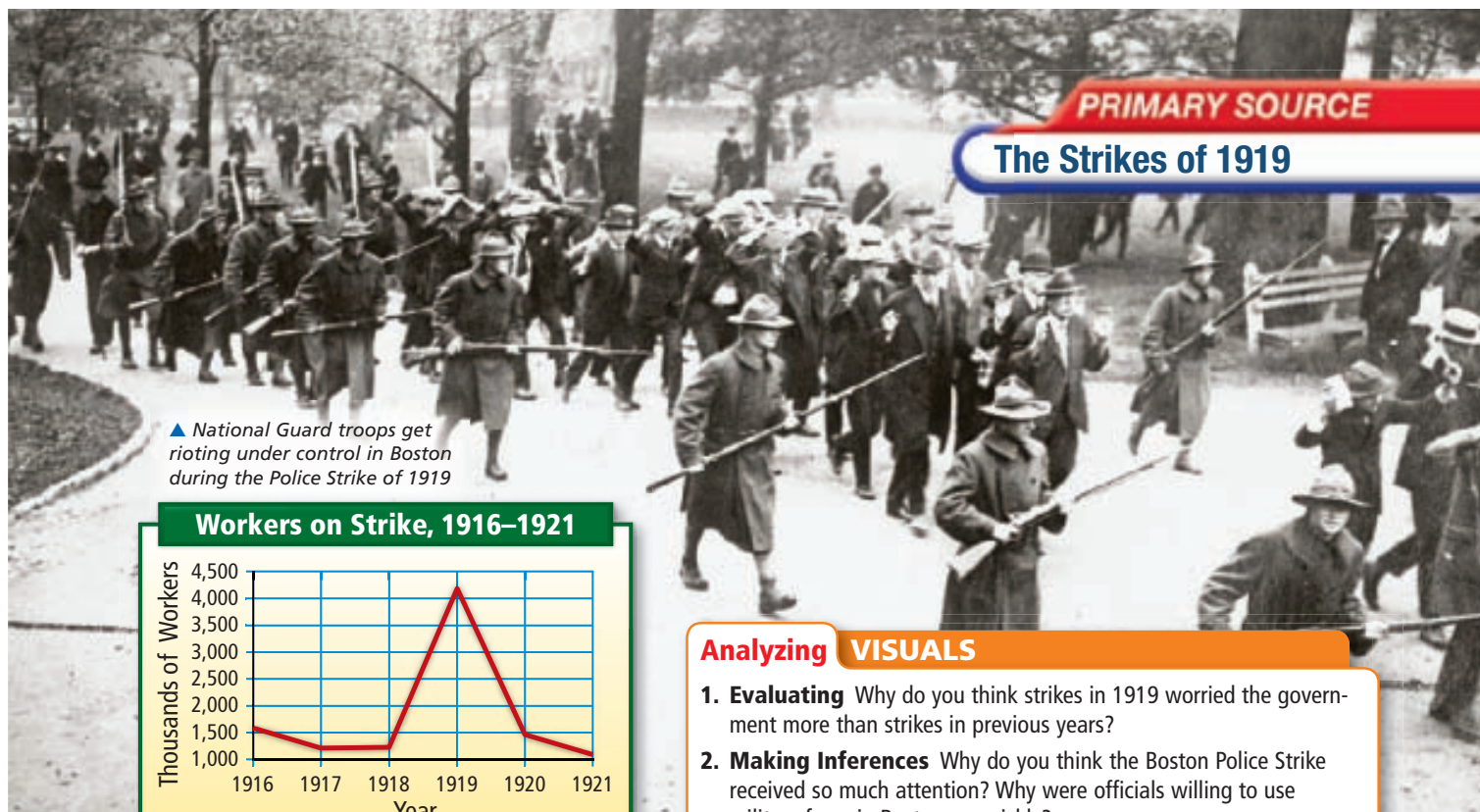
With the war over, Americans welcomed the soldiers back as heroes. Parades were thrown in their honor, and a new organization, the American Legion, was created to support the veterans. But their arrival home was also bittersweet. Two million men now needed to find jobs in an economy that was shutting down its production of war materials and sliding into recession.

When the war ended, government agencies removed their controls from the economy. People raced to buy goods that had been rationed, while businesses rapidly raised prices they had been forced to keep low during the war. The result was rapid inflation. In 1919 prices rose more than 15 percent. Inflation greatly increased the **cost of living**—the cost of food, clothing, shelter, and other essentials that people need to survive. Orders for war materials evaporated, so factories laid off workers. Soldiers returned home looking for civilian employment but found jobs scarce. In short, 1919 was a year of economic turmoil.

## Inflation Leads to Strikes

Many companies had been forced to raise wages during the war, but inflation now threatened to wipe out the gains workers had made. While workers wanted higher wages to keep up with inflation, companies resisted because inflation was also driving up their operating costs.

During the war, the number of workers in unions had increased dramatically. By the time the war ended, workers were better organized and much more capable of implementing strikes. Many business leaders, on the other hand, were determined to break the power of the unions and roll back the gains labor had made. These circumstances led to an enormous wave of strikes in 1919. By the end of the year, more than 3,600 strikes involving more than 4 million workers had taken place.

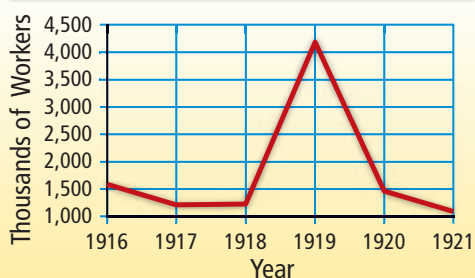


PRIMARY SOURCE

## The Strikes of 1919

▲ National Guard troops get rioting under control in Boston during the Police Strike of 1919

### Workers on Strike, 1916–1921



### Analyzing VISUALS

- Evaluating** Why do you think strikes in 1919 worried the government more than strikes in previous years?
- Making Inferences** Why do you think the Boston Police Strike received so much attention? Why were officials willing to use military force in Boston so quickly?

**The Seattle General Strike** The first major strike took place in Seattle, where some 35,000 shipyard workers walked off the job demanding higher wages and shorter hours. Other unions in Seattle soon joined the shipyard workers and organized a general strike.

A **general strike** is a strike that involves all workers in a community, not just workers in a particular industry. The Seattle general strike involved more than 60,000 people and paralyzed the city for five days. Although the strikers returned to work without making any gains, their actions worried many Americans because the general strike was a common tactic used in Europe by communists and other radical groups.

**The Boston Police Strike** Perhaps the most famous strike of 1919 took place in Boston, where roughly 75 percent of the police force walked off the job. Riots and looting soon erupted in the city, forcing the governor, **Calvin Coolidge**, to call in the National Guard. When the strikers tried to return to work, the police commissioner then fired the strikers and hired a new police force instead.

Despite protests, Coolidge agreed that the men should be fired, declaring: "There is no

right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, anytime." Coolidge's response earned him **widespread** public support and convinced the Republicans to make him their vice presidential candidate in the 1920 election.

**The Steel Strike** Shortly after the police strike ended, one of the largest strikes in American history began when an estimated 350,000 steelworkers went on strike for higher pay, shorter hours, and recognition of their union. Elbert H. Gary, the head of U.S. Steel, refused even to talk to union leaders. Instead, he set out to break the union by using anti-immigrant feelings to divide the workers.

Many steelworkers were immigrants. The company blamed the strike on foreign radicals and called for loyal Americans to return to work. Meanwhile, to keep the mills running, the company hired African Americans and Mexicans as replacement workers. Clashes between company guards and strikers were frequent. In Gary, Indiana, a riot left 18 strikers dead. The strike collapsed in early 1920 and its failure set back the union cause in the steel industry. Steel workers remained unorganized until 1941.

## Racial Unrest

The economic turmoil after the war also contributed to widespread racial unrest. Many African Americans had moved north during the war to take factory jobs. As people began to be laid off and returning soldiers found it hard to find work and affordable housing, many gave in to feelings of racism and blamed African Americans for taking their jobs. Frustration and racism combined to produce violence.

In the summer of 1919, 25 race riots broke out across the nation. African American leader James Weldon Johnson called the summer of 1919, “the red summer” because of the amount of blood that was spilled. The riots began in July, when a mob of angry white people burned shops and homes in an African American neighborhood in Longview, Texas. A week later, in Washington, D.C., gangs of African Americans and whites fought each other for four days before troops got the riots under control.


The worst violence occurred in Chicago. On a hot July day, African Americans went to a whites-only beach. Both sides began throwing stones at each other. Whites also threw stones at an African American teenager swimming

near the beach to prevent him from coming ashore, and he drowned. A full-scale riot then erupted in the city.

Angry African Americans attacked white neighborhoods while whites attacked African American neighborhoods. The Chicago riot lasted for almost two weeks and the government was forced to send in National Guard troops to impose order. By the time the rioting ended, 38 people had been killed—15 white and 23 black—and over 500 had been injured.

The race riots of 1919 disillusioned some African Americans who felt their wartime contributions had been for nothing. For others, however, the wartime struggle for democracy encouraged them to fight for their rights at home.

The race riots of 1919 were different in one respect. For the first time, African Americans organized and fought back against the white mobs. Many African Americans also dedicated themselves to fighting for their rights politically. The NAACP surged in membership after the war, and in 1919, it launched a new campaign for a federal law against lynching.

 **Reading Check Analyzing** Why did the end of the war lead to race riots?

## PAST & PRESENT

### Terrorists Attack America

When terrorists attacked the United States on September 11, 2001, many Americans believed the United States was experiencing something new—multiple attacks by a terrorist organization.

It is almost forgotten by the American people that in June 1919, eight bombs exploded in eight American cities within minutes of each other, and another 30 bombs sent through the mail were intercepted before they exploded. In September 1920 an even larger bomb exploded in New York. As it did after 9/11, the United States government created a new federal agency to protect the American people. In 1919 the government created the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or FBI. In 2002 the government created the Department of Homeland Security.



### September, 1920



▲ In September 1920, a bomb made of 100 lbs. of dynamite and 500 lbs. of steel fragments exploded in New York City, killing 38 people and injuring 300 others.



# The Red Scare

**MAIN Idea** Fear of a Communist revolution caused a nationwide panic.

**HISTORY AND YOU** Many Americans believed the country was in danger in 1919. Read on to see similarities with today's concerns about security.

The wave of strikes in 1919 helped to fuel fears that Communists were conspiring to start a revolution in the United States. Americans had been stunned when Communists seized power in Russia and negotiated a separate peace agreement with Germany. Many Americans viewed this as a betrayal, and hostility toward Communists increased. Communism became associated with disloyalty and treachery.

Americans had long been suspicious of communist ideas. Since the late 1800s, many Americans had accused immigrants of importing radical socialist and communist ideas and blamed them for labor unrest and violence. Events in Russia seemed to justify fears of a Communist revolution. The Soviet establishment of the Communist International in 1919—an organization for coordinating Communist parties in other countries—appeared to be further proof of a growing threat.

The strikes of 1919 fueled fears that Communists, or “reds,” as they were called, might seize power. This led to a nationwide panic known as the **Red Scare**. Many people were particularly concerned about workers using strikes to start a revolution. Seattle’s mayor, Ole Hanson, for example, claimed that the Seattle general strike was part of an attempt to “take possession of our American government and try to duplicate the anarchy of Russia.”

In April, the postal service intercepted more than 30 parcels containing homemade bombs addressed to prominent Americans. In May, union members, socialists, and communists organized a parade in Cleveland to protest the jailing of Socialist Party leader Eugene Debs. The parade turned into a series of riots. By the time police and army units got the violence under control, two people were dead and another 40 were injured.

In June, eight bombs in eight cities exploded within minutes of one another, suggesting a nationwide conspiracy. One of them damaged the home of United States Attorney General **A. Mitchell Palmer**. Most people believed the bombings were the work of radicals trying to destroy the American way of life.

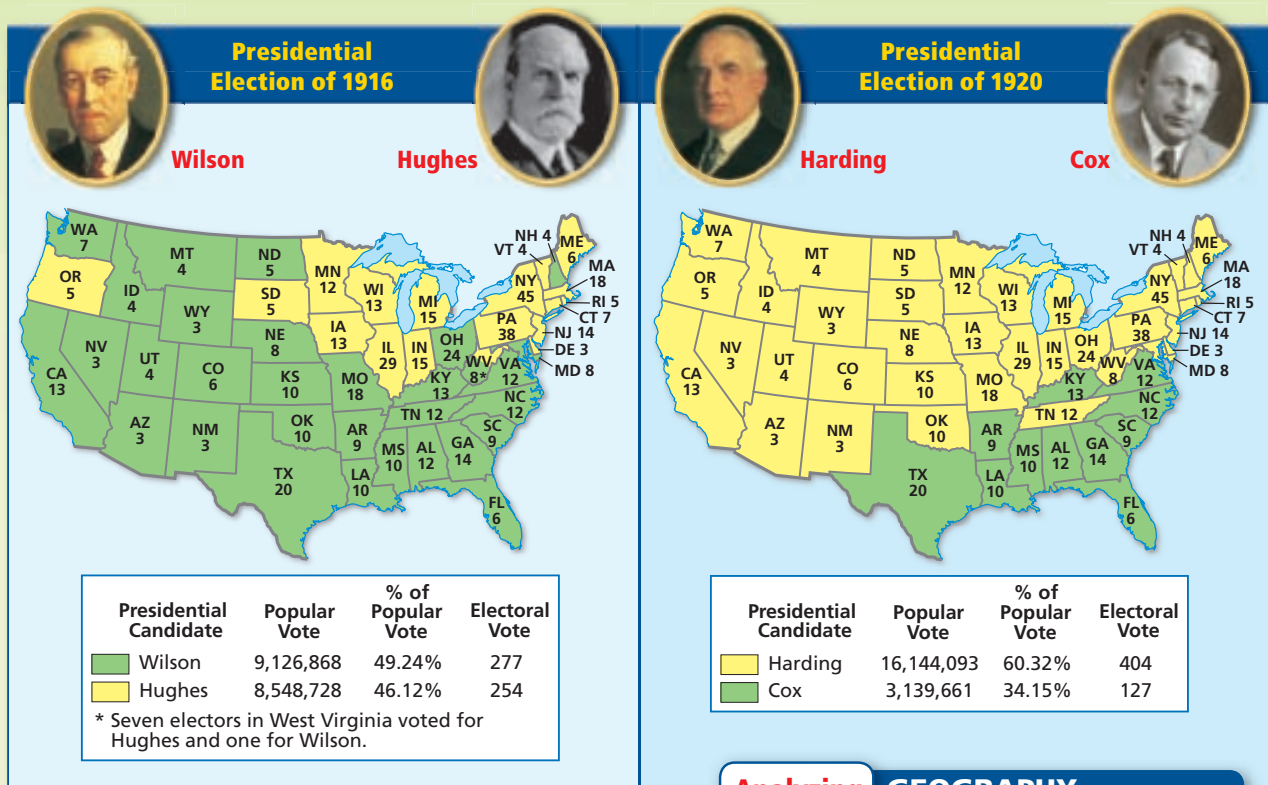
**September, 2001**

▼ Firefighters search for victims in the rubble of the World Trade Center in September 2001.

## MAKING CONNECTIONS

- 1. Comparing** How was the government’s response to the 1919 and 1920 attacks similar to its response to the attacks of September 11, 2001? How was it different?
- 2. Synthesizing** How do you think the government should have responded to the bombings of 1919 and 1920? In what ways were the government’s policies inappropriate?

## The End of Progressivism?



Many political historians used to think of the election of 1920 as the end of the Progressive Era. It is true that the 1920 election represented a dramatic shift from the progressive Woodrow Wilson to the much more traditionally conservative Warren Harding. But did the election really show a great change in voting habits throughout the country?

## Analyzing GEOGRAPHY

- Region** Which region voted for the Democrats in both elections? Which region voted Republican in both elections?
- Region** What region of the country changed its vote between 1916 and 1920? Why do you think this happened? Does this change suggest people's views of progressivism had changed?

## The Palmer Raids

Declaring that a "blaze of revolution" was "burning up the foundations of society," Palmer took action. He established a special division within the Justice Department, the General Intelligence Division. This division, headed by **J. Edgar Hoover**, eventually became the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Although evidence pointed to no single group as the bombers, Palmer's agents targeted the foreign-born. On November 7, 1919, Palmer ordered a series of raids on offices of the Union of Russian Workers in 12 cities. Less than seven weeks later, a transport ship left

New York for Russia carrying 249 immigrants who had been deported, or expelled from the country.

In January 1920, Palmer ordered another series of raids, this time on the headquarters of various radical organizations. Nearly 6,000 people were arrested. That same month, the New York state legislature expelled five members of the Socialist Party who had been elected to the legislature. Over the next few months, 32 states passed sedition laws making it illegal to join groups advocating revolution. Palmer's raids continued until the spring of 1920. **Authorities** detained thousands of suspects and nearly 600 people were **deported**.

Palmer's agents often ignored the civil liberties of the suspects. Officers entered homes and offices without search warrants. People were mistreated. Some were jailed for indefinite periods of time and were not allowed to talk to their attorneys. Many of the immigrants who were deported were never granted a court hearing to challenge the evidence against them or to contest the deportation order.

For a while, Palmer was regarded as a national hero. His raids, however, failed to turn up any hard evidence of revolutionary conspiracy. When his prediction that violence would rock the nation on May Day 1920—a celebration of workers in Europe—proved wrong, Palmer lost much of his credibility and support.

The Red Scare greatly influenced people's attitudes during the 1920s. Americans often linked radicalism with immigrants, and that attitude led to a call for Congress to limit immigration.

## The Election of 1920

Economic problems, labor unrest, and racial tensions, as well as the fresh memories of World War I, all combined to create a general sense of disillusionment in the United States. By 1920 Americans wanted an end to the upheaval.

During the 1920 campaign, Ohio governor James M. Cox and his running mate, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt, ran on a platform of progressive ideals. President Wilson tried to convince the Democrats to make the campaign a referendum on the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations, but the party chose not to take a strong stand on the issue for fear of alienating voters.


The Republican candidate, Warren G. Harding, called for a return to "normalcy." His vice-presidential running mate, Calvin Coolidge, was chosen because people admired the way he had handled the Boston police strike. Harding argued that what the United States needed was a return to simpler days before the Progressive Era reforms:

### PRIMARY SOURCE

"[Our] present need is not heroics, but healing; not nostrums, but normalcy; not revolution, but [bold] restoration; not agitation, but adjustment; not surgery, but serenity; not the dramatic, but the dispassionate; . . . not submergence in internationality, but sustainment in triumphant nationality."

—quoted in *Portrait of a Nation*

Harding's sentiments struck a chord with voters, and he won the election by a landslide margin of over 7 million votes. Many Americans were weary of more crusades to reform society and the world. They hoped to put the country's racial and labor unrest and economic troubles behind them and build a more prosperous and stable society.

 **Examining** After World War I, why were Americans suspicious of some union leaders?

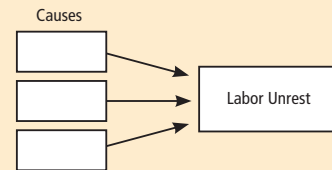
## Section 4 REVIEW

### Vocabulary

- 1. Explain** the significance of: cost of living, general strike, Calvin Coolidge, Red Scare, A. Mitchell Palmer, J. Edgar Hoover, deport.

### Main Ideas

- 2. Identifying** Use a chart like the one below to list the various causes of labor unrest in 1919.



- 3. Describing** What events made many Americans believe a revolution was imminent in 1919?

### Critical Thinking

- 4. Big Ideas** Why did the end of World War I bring such turmoil to the United States?
- 5. Analyzing** Provide evidence to explain whether or not the Palmer raids deprived some people of their civil rights.
- 6. Analyzing Visuals** Examine the photograph on page 577. What do you notice about the rioters? What does this tell you about the riots?

### Writing About History

- 7. Persuasive Writing** Imagine that you are a European immigrant working in a factory in the United States in 1919. Write a letter to a relative in Europe describing the feelings of Americans toward you and other immigrants.

### History ONLINE

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