Notes Chapter 15 The Jazz Age

I. A Clash of Values

A. Nativism Resurges

1. The Sacco-Vanzetti case exemplified the prejudices and fears of the period. Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were arrested for the killing of two employees of a shoe company in Massachusetts and stealing the $15,000 payroll. Many leaped to the conclusion that they were guilty because they were Italian immigrants and anarchists. Executed 7 years later still proclaiming their innocence.
2. Pseudo-Scientific Racism- the eugenics movement reinforced nativist and racist feelings. They believed that white Protestants of northern European descent were superior. The movement warned against breeding with “unfit” or “inferior” races.
3. Return of the Ku Klux Klan- wanted to restrict immigration, used threats and violence to intimidate newly freed African Americans, also targeted Catholics, Jews, and immigrants. Had only a few members until they hired a public relations firm who were paid a commission for each new Klan recruit. They hired “salesmen” and paid them to promote the Klan. Membership reached nearly 4 million by 1924. Began to decline in the late 1920s as a result of scandals and power struggles involving its leaders.

B. Controlling Immigration

1. Emergency Quota Act: signed by President Harding in 1921. Only 3% of the total number of

people in any ethnic group could be admitted in a single year. Discriminated against people from eastern and southern Europe. Therefore ethnic identity and national origin determined admission to the U.S.

2. The National Origins Act of 1924. Set quotas down at 2%. Exempted natives of the western hemisphere from the quota system. Mexican immigration increased.

C. The New Morality

1. The New Morality: Challenged traditional ways of seeing and thinking. It glorified youth, personal freedom. The ideas of romance and friendship linked to successful marriage. Single women were working to help families, but also to break away from parents and have their own identity. More women attending college and becoming independent. The automobile played an important role in the new morality, gave youth more independence and allowed them to escape the watchful eyes of their parents.
2. Women in the 1920s: Fashion became more modern. Flappers pursued social freedom while others sought financial independence. Women made contributions in science, medicine, law, and literature. Florence Sabin’s medical research led to a dramatic drop in death rates from tuberculosis (tb). Edith Wharton received the Pulitzer Prize for literature. Health nurse Margaret Sanger founded the organization which became Planned Parenthood. Margaret Mead earned recognition as one of the first women anthropologists.
3. The Fundamentalist Movement
4. Fundamentalist beliefs: The country was losing its traditional values, the nation was experiencing a moral decline, and believed that the bible was literally true and without error. They rejected Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution and instead believed in creationism.
5. The Scopes Trial: In 1925 Tennessee passed the Butler Act which outlawed the teaching of evolution. The ACLU advertised for a teacher willing to be arrested for breaking that law, John T. Scopes volunteered. He taught the theory of evolution, was arrested, put on trial and found guilty.
6. Prohibition: define
7. Prohibition was established in 1920 by the 18th Amendment.
8. The Volstead Act was passed to try to enforce Prohibition. It made the U.S. Treasury Department responsible. They made more than 540,000 arrests but Americans largely ignored the law. In cities, they flocked to secret bars called speakeasies. Bootlegging was common in rural areas. Created a billion dollar industry for gangsters like Al Capone.
9. Prohibition was repealed in 1933 by the 21st Amendment.

Review Questions:

1. Why did many people View Sacco and Vanzetti with suspicion?
2. How did the KKK add to its membership in the early 1920s?
3. Why did membership in the KKK begin to decline in the late 1920s?
4. According to the Emergency Quota Act what was admission to the U.S. going to be based on?
5. What was glorified by the new morality of the 1920s?
6. What group was exempted from the quota system established by the National Origins Act of 1924?
7. Why was John T. Scopes put on trial?
8. What act outlawed the teaching of evolution?
9. What amendment repealed Prohibition?
10. What was the purpose of the Volstead Act?